COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

CTC SENTINEL

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Contents

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Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network

By Hassan Abbas

Pakistani commandos respond to the March 30 attack on a police academy near Lahore. - Arif Ali/AFP/Getty Images

ON MARCH 30, 2009, militants launched a deadly assault on a police training center outside Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's Punjab Province. Eight police cadets were killed.[1] Less than a month earlier, on March 3, gunmen in Lahore ambushed members of the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team, killing at least eight people. Punjab, the most populated of Pakistan's provinces, has largely escaped the bloodshed plaguing the country's troubled northwest.[2] Yet since 2007, violence has escalated in the province. The bold terrorist attacks in Pakistan's heartland—within Punjab Province and in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad—show that local logistical support for these attacks is attributable to what is often labeled the "Punjabi Taliban" network.[3] The major factions of this network include operatives from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan and Jaysh-i-Muhammad—all groups that were previously strictly focused on Kashmir and domestic sectarian violence.

Members of these groups are increasingly supporting Taliban elements from Pakistan's tribal regions to conduct attacks in sensitive cities

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1 Barry Newhouse, "Pakistani Taliban Claim Responsibility in Lahore Police Attack," Voice of America, March 31, 2009.

2 This consists of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North-West Frontier Province, which both lie near the tumultuous border with Afghanistan.

3 Although Baitullah Mehsud, the head of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), accepted responsibility for the March 30 attack on the police academy, there are witnesses who heard some of the terrorists conversing in Seraiki—a Punjabi dialect spoken in southern Punjab. This suggests that Punjabi militants either orchestrated the attack, or at least collaborated with the TTP. See Sabrina Tavernise and Sharon Otterman, "Militants Claim Responsibility for Pakistan Attack," *New York Times*, April 1, 2009.

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such as Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore. Ongoing investigations into the Marriott Hotel bombing that rocked Islamabad in September 2008, in which dozens of Punjabi suspects were arrested and interrogated,[4] demonstrate the role played by Punjabi militants.[5] One investigator working on the Marriott attack revealed that "all evidences of the terrorist bombing led to South Waziristan via Jhang [a city in Punjab where Lashkar-i-Jhangvi has strong links]. The truck that was rammed into the hotel was also from Jhang."

This article attempts to define the Punjabi Taliban network, in addition to profiling the three main factions that contribute to its ranks.

Who are the "Punjabi Taliban"?
The Punjabi Taliban network is a loose conglomeration of members of banned militant groups of Punjabi origin— sectarian as well as those focused on the conflict in Kashmir—that have developed strong connections with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Afghan Taliban and other militant groups based in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).[6] They shuttle between FATA and the rest of Pakistan, providing logistical support to FATA- and Afghan-based militants to conduct terrorist operations deep inside Pakistan. Between March 2005 and March 2007 alone, for example, about 2,000 militants from southern and northern Punjab Province reportedly moved to South Waziristan and started different businesses in an effort to create logistical support networks.[7] Given their knowledge about Punjabi cities and security structure, they have proved to be valuable partners for the TTP as it targets cities in Punjab, such as Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad.[8]

Perhaps the best explanation of the Punjabi Taliban's structure came from Tariq Pervez, the newly appointed head of Pakistan's nascent National Counterterrorism Authority (NACTA): "ideas, logistics, cash [comes] from the Gulf. Arab guys, mainly Egyptians and Saudis, are on hand to provide the chemistry. Veteran Punjabi extremists plot the attacks, while the Pakistan Taliban provides the martyrs."[9]

The name "Punjabi Taliban" was first used for ethnic Punjabis associated with Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI) who, under the leadership of Qari Saifullah Akhtar, went to support and join the regime of Taliban leader Mullah Omar

> "The purpose of undertaking operations under the moniker of the 'Punjabi Taliban' is that they have the freedom to operate without the level of command and control inherent when working for the more established militant outfits."

in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s.[10] The second time the name was used was in 2001-2003 when former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf banned some militant and sectarian groups that had a support base in Punjab.[11] As a result, some of these elements began moving to FATA to seek safe havens and establish new camps. These Punjabi militants also reportedly established separate training centers in FATA, especially in North Waziristan.[12] The most recent use

of the name began in 2007, when Maulvi Nazir, a militant leader who with some official Pakistani support challenged Uzbek foreign fighters residing in South Waziristan, was hailed by some as a leader of the Punjabi Taliban. This allegation arose because Maulvi Nazir attracted many Punjabi recruits from banned organizations to fight Uzbek foreign fighters.[13] The plan worked, but not without creating another frightening menace in the shape of a reenergized "Punjabi Taliban."

The current Punjabi Taliban network has a number of key features. First, it lacks any organization or command structure and operates as a loose network of elements from distinct militant groups. Members from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LeJ), Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Jaysh-i-Muhammad (JeM) and their various splinter groups are all considered to be part of this loose network. Small cells unaffiliated with any larger group are also involved. This designation, however, does not apply to all members of LeJ, SSP, and JeM; it only refers to individuals or factions who shifted to FATA or collaborate closely with the TTP, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) and other militant groups from the tribal areas.

Second, many of these militants directly benefited from state patronage[14] in the 1990s (and in some cases even later) and were professionally trained in asymmetrical warfare, guerrilla tactics and sabotage. The Punjabi Taliban are increasingly using heavy weapons and operating independent of the TTP or other militant groups that belong to the area. In late December 2008, for example, five Punjabi Taliban killed in a drone missile attack were observed "patrolling the area [South Waziristan] in pickup trucks mounted with heavy guns and had been firing at drones wherever they spotted them. The vehicles were camouflaged with mud and grass."[15]

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4 The suspects included members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam.

5 Tariq Butt, "Mastermind of Marriott Bombing Escapes," *The News*, November 17, 2008.

6 Saeed Shah, "Pakistan Blames Taliban for Lahore Attack Which Leaves 11 Dead," *Guardian*, March 31, 2009; Rahimullah Yusufzai, "And Now There is Tehrik-e-Taliban Baluchistan," *The News*, March 4, 2009.

7 Aamir Latif, "Punjabi Taliban Rise in Waziristan," IslamOnline.net, April 22, 2009.

8 This information is based on an assessment shared by a senior official of the Ministry of Interior, Islamabad.

9 Kaustav Chakrabarti, "Taliban Spreads into Pakistan's Heart," Rediff.com, February 13, 2009.

10 Amir Mir, "HUJI Chief Still at Large," *The News*, September 23, 2008.

11 These groups include: Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Sipah-i-Muhammad (SMP), Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Tehrik-i-Jafria (TeJ), Jaysh-i-Muhammad (JeM) and Lashkar-i-Tayyiba. When some of these groups started operating under new names—TeJ as Islami Tehrik Pakistan, SSP as Millat-i-Islami Pakistan, and JeM as Khudamul Islam—they were also banned in 2003.

12 Pir Zubair Shah and Salamn Masood, "U.S. Reported

to Kill 12 in Pakistan," *New York Times*, September 12, 2008.

13 Mushtaq Yusufzai, "Letter Explains Drive Against Foreign Militants in Waziristan," *The News*, April 5, 2007.

14 This patronage developed because the country's intelligence agencies utilized them for supporting the insurgency in Kashmir against India.

15 "Twin Drone Strikes Kill 5 Punjabi Taliban," *Daily Times*, December 23, 2008.

Third, most of the groups are Sunni and Salafist in orientation. A recent International Crisis Group report maintained that "violent Deobandi networks in Punjab lie at the root of Pakistan's militancy problem."[16] The various components of the Punjabi Taliban owe their ideological training to hardline Deobandi *madrasa* networks that were nurtured and expanded in Punjab during President Zia ul-Haq's years in office from 1977-1988.

Fourth, Punjabi militants are distinct from traditional Pashtun Taliban—in terms of language, dress and other identifiable features. The Punjabi Taliban are comparatively more educated, better equipped and technologically savvier than their Pashtun counterparts.[17] This is a result of their upbringing in Punjab Province (which has better educational facilities) and urban linkages where internet access and communications equipment are more readily available.

Fifth, unlike TTP cadres and Afghan Taliban, the Punjabi Taliban are purportedly more prone to mercenary actions. Pakistani intelligence sources claim that the Punjabi Taliban can be hired by domestic as well as regional operators to undertake freelance operations.[18] For instance, it is widely known in Punjab law enforcement circles that many in the Punjabi Taliban began their careers as criminals.[19] They originally moved to FATA (after their organizations were banned) to raise funds through drug smuggling and acquire weapons from the weapons markets of Dara Adam Khel.[20]

Finally, the Punjabi Taliban are more likely to conduct *fidayin* attacks, which, in the South Asian context, implies that the attacker comes equipped with weapons and ammunition and is willing to fight until death. This is in contrast to suicide bombings, where the death of the attacker is required.

Major Factions of Punjabi Taliban Network
Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LeJ)
Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)
These two associated and banned groups are largely Punjab-based. Estimates place LeJ's numbers at less than 1,000, and the group is almost entirely composed of militants. The SSP, which is also a political group, has been estimated to have around 100,000 active members, but the number of active fighters is probably in the 2,000-3,000 range.[21] Although both groups are anti-Shi`a in essence, their members have been involved in pursuing other agendas vis-à-vis Kashmir and Afghanistan. For instance, one of the former members of the SSP, identified as "Commander Tariq," reportedly heads the local Taliban in Darra Adam Khel, located between the Kohat area in the NWFP and Orakzai Agency in FATA.[22] Tariq, who has been monitored by law enforcement for years, was previously primarily engaged in sectarian attacks on the Shi`a. Lately, however, he has been found involved in kidnappings-for-ransom and attacks on foreigners. He played a central role in the February killing of a Polish engineer who was working in the area for an NGO.[23]

Similarly, LeJ is believed to be the "lynchpin of the alignment between al-Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban and sectarian groups."[24] LeJ was the first Punjab-based militant group to shift its members to Afghanistan during the Taliban era. This allowed it to establish early connections with al-Qa`ida's leadership in the mid-1990s.

Many mosques and *madrasas* linked with LeJ and SSP in Punjab operate as the networking centers for the Punjabi Taliban.[25] After recent police interrogations of LeJ members, Karachi's police chief publicly maintained that these militants "confessed to involvement in attacks on security forces and NATO suppliers in northern areas" of Pakistan while also admitting

that they select "prospective fighters from the city [Karachi] and trains them in Waziristan and Miranshah for combating security forces."[26] Despite being banned, both groups are active throughout Pakistan. Although LeJ has been targeted by Pakistan's civil and military agencies, the SSP has largely managed to escape such targeting because of its larger support base, evident through the fact that prior SSP candidates have won national assembly seats.

Jaysh-i-Muhammad (JeM)
A splinter group of Harkat-ul Mujahidin (HuM),[27] JeM derives its strength from Punjab Province. Although banned in 2001 and having faced internal divisions, it is still operative and changes its name every few years to evade scrutiny. General estimates place its active ranks at around 5,000, with about 1,500-2,000 fighters.[28] Part of the reason its cadres are not pursued effectively is due to the incompetence of civilian law enforcement. Pakistani analyst Amir Rana, however, alleges that another factor explains why JeM has retained its strength: "The military wants to keep alive its strategic options in Kashmir."[29] Although the government of Pakistan claims they do not know the whereabouts of JeM's chief, Masood Azhar, it is rumored that he is with Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan.[30]

Conclusion
More information is needed to fully understand the dynamics of the Punjabi Taliban network, but early indicators are that it is still in the initial stages of development. It caters to the aspirations, financial needs and worldview of those militants who believe that they were abandoned by the intelligence agencies in pursuance of Musharraf's directives

16 International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge," March 13, 2009.

17 "Why Mehsud is Claiming Responsibility for Attacks," *Daily Times*, April 8, 2009.

18 According to this allegation, Punjabi Taliban groups could undertake operations for radical Muslim groups, or even the Afghan or Indian intelligence agencies.

19 Personal interviews, Pakistani police officers, Punjab Province, March 2009.

20 Ibid.

21 These numbers are derived from various reports. They are only general estimates.

22 Personal interviews, Pakistani police officers, Punjab Province, March 2009.

23 Mazhar Tufail, "New Efforts Launched to Recover Remains of Polish Engineer," *The News*, March 2, 2009.

24 "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge."

25 Saeed Shah, "Pakistan Bombings Spur Hunt for New al Qaeda Boss," *Globe and Mail*, April 5, 2009.

26 Faraz Khan, "5 Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Activists Arrested," *Daily Times*, April 9, 2009.

27 HuM, largely dismantled, had linkages with the Kashmir theater as well as with al-Qa`ida. Its leader, Fazlur Rahman Khalil, was a signatory to Usama bin Ladin's 1998 declaration of war. It largely remains committed to the Kashmiri cause.

28 These numbers are derived from various reports. They are only general estimates.

29 Chris Brummitt, "Pakistan Militants Strengthen in Heartland," Associated Press, March 23, 2009.

30 A large JeM-controlled *madrasa* cum "physical activity center" in the heart of Masood Azhar's home city of Bahawalpur is still operational. Azhar reportedly launched his new book from there in early 2008.

after 9/11.[31] Elements from groups such as Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (and its associated group, Jama`at-ud-Da`wa), however, are apparently not linked with the Punjabi Taliban because their command and control as well as hierarchical structure has remained intact over the years. In comparison, LeJ and JeM splintered into smaller groups due to policy differences among leaders and disagreements over properties and finances.

It is unlikely that the Punjabi Taliban network will transform itself into an organized group in the near future. Instead, it will remain a loose coalition of members from more prominent terrorist organizations. The purpose of undertaking operations under the moniker of the "Punjabi Taliban" is that they have the freedom to operate without the level of command and control inherent when working for the more established militant outfits.

Other analysts are less sanguine. Pakistani security analyst Zeenia Satti recently predicted that the "Punjabi chapter of the Tahrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan will emerge with a ferocity that may dwarf the Baitullah Mehsuds and the Mullah Fazlullahs of NWFP."[32] This development would amount to a significant danger to Pakistan because Punjab is not only the most populous and prosperous province, but is home to the army headquarters and sensitive nuclear installations. Furthermore, a major component of the Pakistan Army comes from the province; if civil strife or civil war were to escalate and the army was called in to control law and order, it could cause cracks in the army's discipline. Although this is a worst case scenario, it is nevertheless critical to enhance Pakistan's law enforcement capacity and counterterrorism strategy to prevent this outcome from becoming a reality.

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31 Amir Mir, *The True Face of Jihadis: Inside Pakistan's Network of Terror* (Lahore: Mashal Books, 2005).

32 Zeenia Satti, "Post Mumbai Hype," *The News*, March 26, 2009.

The 2008 Belgium Cell and FATA's Terrorist Pipeline

By Paul Cruickshank

ON DECEMBER 11, 2008, 14 individuals were arrested in Belgium and two in France in a major counterterrorism operation.[1] The arrests, just hours before an EU Summit meeting in Brussels, made headlines around the world because one of the six charged by Belgian authorities was "al-Qa`ida living legend" Malika el-Aroud, the widow of the al-Qa`ida operative who assassinated Afghan Northern Alliance Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud two days before the September 11 attacks on the United States.[2]

Belgian authorities accuse her of having worked together with her new husband, Moez Garsallaoui, a Tunisian militant, to recruit individuals for training in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.[3] Police launched the arrest operation after three young Belgian Moroccans allegedly recruited by el-Aroud and Garsallaoui returned from FATA to Belgium.[4] According to Glen Audenaert, the director of the Belgian Federal Police, "We established there were contacts between members of the terrorist organization in Belgium and the highest levels of Al Qaeda... people in direct contact with Mr. Bin Laden."[5]

Based on information drawn from interviews with senior U.S. and Belgian counterterrorism officials, lawyers involved in the case, and some of the suspects themselves, this article sheds new light on the "terror pipeline" connecting Europe and FATA in the context of the alleged Belgian cell.

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1 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Belgian 'Al Qaeda Cell' Linked to 2006 Airline plot," CNN, February 13, 2009; "Terrorisme: un Franco-Tunisien mis en examen pour ses liens présumés avec une filière afghane," Agence France-Presse, December 15, 2008.

2 The six individuals were charged with "participation in a terrorist group." For an in-depth profile of Malika el-Aroud, see Paul Cruickshank, "Love in the Time of Terror," *Marie Claire*, March 2009.

3 Robertson and Cruickshank.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

A Europe-Wide Problem

Until recently, the FATA safe haven troubled British counterterrorism officials significantly more than their counterparts in other European countries. This was a result of the United Kingdom's large Pakistani diaspora community.[6] The British intelligence agency MI5 recently estimated that 75% of terrorist plots they investigate have ties to Pakistan.[7] Those plots included a 2006 failed operation to blow up at least seven transatlantic airliners.[8]

Governments in continental Europe were more concerned about citizens gaining terrorist knowledge in Iraq and North Africa, a function of continental Europe's large Arab diaspora. In the last year, however, that view has been changing. While travel flows to North Africa still cause serious concern, there has been a significant reduction in the number of European militants traveling to Iraq, a function of al-Qa`ida in Iraq's (AQI) waning fortunes, the extreme barbarism that has tarnished its brand, and a crackdown on cross-border infiltration networks.[9] Few plots in Europe have been tied to returnees from Iraq.[10] Conversely, a growing number of terrorist plots, such as a plot to target the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Germany in September 2007 and a plot to target the Barcelona metro in January 2008, have seen operatives train in FATA.[11]

Alain Grignard, who heads counterterrorist operations for the Belgian Federal Police, said that the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan have replaced Iraq as the destination

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6 It is estimated that there are more than one million people in the United Kingdom of Pakistani ancestry.

7 Duncan Gardham, "MI5 Chief Warns of Threat from Global Recession," *Daily Telegraph*, January 8, 2009.

8 Senior U.S. officials stated that several of the airline plotters trained in FATA. See Richard Greenberg, Paul Cruickshank, and Chris Hansen, "Inside the Terror Plot that Rivaled 9/11," NBC, September 15, 2008.

9 Elaine Sciolino, "Fears of Iraq Becoming a Terrorist Incubator Seem Overblown French Say," *New York Times*, April 8, 2008; Karen DeYoung, "Fewer Foreigners Crossing Into Iraq from Syria to Fight," *Washington Post*, September 16, 2007.

10 Ibid.

11 Souad Mekhennet and Michael Moss, "Europeans Get Terror Training Inside Pakistan," *New York Times*, September 10, 2007; Elaine Sciolino, "Terror Threat from Pakistan said to Expand," *New York Times*, February 10, 2008.

of choice for aspiring jihadists from Belgium and other countries on the European continent. According to Grignard, "Not since the year before 9/11 have we seen as many people travel towards the Afghanistan-Pakistan conflict region."[12] This view is echoed by U.S. intelligence agencies who have observed an "an influx of new Western recruits into the tribal areas since mid-2006."[13] In February 2009, Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair warned that "the primary threat from Europe-based extremists stems from al-Qa`ida and Sunni affiliates who return from training in Pakistan to conduct attacks in Europe or the United States."[14]

Unlike the Iraqi insurgency, fighting Americans in Afghanistan does not seem to have lost its luster for European militants. It appears that aspiring recruits have wised up to the notion that joining AQI means leaping aboard a rapidly moving conveyor belt for suicide bombing.[15]

Recruitment

The recent Belgian case provides a window into how young European militants are lured to Pakistan's tribal areas. Belgian police claim that el-Aroud and her husband, Moez Garsallaoui, acted in tandem to encourage individuals to leave Belgium to fight in Afghanistan. El-Aroud, they argue, inspired radical-leaning youngsters to sign up for jihad through inflammatory postings on a website she ran called "Minbar SOS." Garsallaoui, for his part, toured Brussels' immigrant neighborhoods to physically recruit people.[16]

During an interview for CNN three years ago, el-Aroud explained how she administered Minbar SOS, her French language website. The website included postings of attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq, along with a section dedicated to the speeches of top al-Qa`ida leaders.[17] By the end of 2008, the site had more than 1,400 subscribers.[18] Authorities in Belgium, however, could do little to prevent el-Aroud from administering the site due to strong freedom of speech protections under Belgian law.[19]

According to Grignard, websites such as Minbar SOS function as recruiting grounds for terrorist operatives who use them to identify individuals willing to fight jihad. "It's a good way to get people together and then establish a

"Their accounts suggest that jihadist networks in FATA have relatively loose organizational structures."

more secret dialogue with people that are interesting to the organization," he explained.[20] Belgian counterterrorism officials said that monitoring her website helped identify the presence of a recruiting network for Afghanistan.[21]

El-Aroud's iconic status appears to have attracted Hicham Beyayo, 23, one of the young Belgian Moroccans arrested in the case, who became a Minbar SOS site administrator before traveling to Pakistan.[22] Beyayo claims that Garsallaoui recruited him to fight jihad in Afghanistan. Christophe Marchand, Beyayo's lawyer, said that his client was approached by Garsallaoui in a mosque near his home in Anderlecht, a tough immigrant neighborhood, and that el-Aroud's husband persuaded him

to travel to Afghanistan to fight against Americans to restore the Taliban to power. Garsallaoui allegedly emphasized that jihad in Afghanistan was a religious duty and also cast the fighting in heroic and glamorous tones.[23]

Garsallaoui's recruiting was not restricted to Belgium. He also recruited two French subscribers to Minbar SOS who for legal reasons can only be identified by their initials H.A. and W.O.[24] W.O. claimed he was arrested by Turkish police in the summer of 2008 after he tried to return to Europe from FATA. When he was later interrogated by French authorities, he provided an extremely detailed account of his journey to the tribal areas of Pakistan. During the interrogation, W.O. stated that "calls to jihad" on Minbar SOS were "incessant" and the video propaganda he viewed on the site made him want to volunteer.

Travel to FATA

In December 2007, Garsallaoui's recruits gathered in Istanbul, Turkey. There were six in total. Two from France and four from Belgium,[25] including Beyayo and two friends who lived on his square in Anderlecht, Ali el-Ghanouti and Y. Harrizi.[26] Garsallaoui's plan was to bribe smugglers to take them illegally across the Iranian and Pakistani borders to FATA. Garsallaoui instructed each of the recruits to bring 2,000 euros for this purpose; he himself was carrying a significantly larger sum in cash.[27] Garsallaoui set off first and the others followed two weeks later. They eventually arrived in Zahedan in eastern Iran, a border town described by the French recruit W.O. as a key

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12 Robertson and Cruickshank.

13 J. Michael McConnell, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 5, 2008.

14 Dennis C. Blair, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 12, 2009.

15 Personal interview, Alain Grignard, head of counter-terrorist operations for the Belgian Federal Police, August 2008.

16 Robertson and Cruickshank.

17 Personal interviews, Malika el-Aroud and Moez Garsallaoui, Guin, Switzerland, February 2006. For the video of Malika el-Aroud demonstrating her website, see Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "One Woman's War," CNN, February 10, 2009.

18 This figure is based on the author's own monitoring of el-Aroud's website, Minbar SOS. Many more individuals presumably regularly accessed the site.

19 Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009.

20 Personal interview, Alain Grignard, head of counter-terrorist operations for the Belgian Federal Police, February 2009.

21 Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009.

22 Robertson and Cruickshank.

23 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, lawyer for Hicham Beyayo, Brussels, February 2009.

24 Details of W.O.'s interrogation by French authorities in January and February 2009 were made available to the author by Christophe Marchand, Hicham Beyayo's lawyer. Under Belgian law, defense attorneys can make public details of the legal case against their clients in the interests of their defense.

25 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation.

26 Gilbert Dupont, "Les six du réseau kamikaze," *La Dernière Heure*, December 13, 2008; Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009. Ali el-Ghanouti and Y. Harrizi were also charged in the case.

27 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation.

staging point for militants traveling to fight in the Afghan-Pakistan war zone.[28] From there, smugglers took them across the Pakistani border into the tribal areas, which they entered on January 10, 2008, transiting through Bannu, a district that borders both South and North Waziristan.[29] Beyayo later told his lawyer that he was amazed at the lack of controls and how easy it was to enter the area.[30]

Beyayo's and W.O.'s accounts of their time in FATA, where they stayed for much of 2008, provide a rare glimpse into the terrorist safe haven. Their accounts

"They received both religious instruction and military training from Egyptian and Syrian instructors."

suggest that jihadist networks in FATA have relatively loose organizational structures, a view shared by American and Belgian counterterrorism officials.[31] In the 1980s and 1990s, several jihadist groups, including al-Qa`ida, had organizational structures in place, mainly centered around Peshawar, to process arriving volunteers. Yet when the Belgian and French recruits crossed into the tribal areas in early 2008, they received no such greeting. Nobody knew who they were.[32] Although their smuggler introduced them to individuals linked to the "Arab camp" in FATA, they were initially met with open suspicion.[33] Eventually, however, they were able to persuade their interlocutors of their jihadist bona fides. The fact that they were reunited with Garsallaoui, their recruiter, on January 13, presumably helped in this regard. For the next several months, a Syrian operative by

the name of "Driss" was their principle handler.[34]

A senior counterterrorism source with detailed knowledge of the investigation told the author that during Garsallaoui's time in the Afghan-Pakistan border region, he developed close connections with a senior al-Qa`ida operative who orchestrated the 2006 airline plot in the United Kingdom. The source could not reveal the al-Qa`ida operative's name because of the ongoing investigation. Separately, Belgian counterterrorism officials believe that Garsallaoui was the main link between the Belgian cell and al-Qa`ida.[35]

W.O., the French recruit, stated that "the Arab camp" was for all intents and purposes run by al-Qa`ida. He said that the Arab camp was the smallest grouping of foreign fighters in FATA with about 300 to 400 recruits, mostly from Saudi Arabia but some from other parts of the Middle East and North Africa.[36] According to W.O., al-Qa`ida's fighters and zones where they conducted training were spread out across North and South Waziristan for security reasons. W.O. stated that al-Qa`ida's military commander at the time of their arrival was Abu Laith al-Libi. Abu Laith was killed by a U.S. missile strike in the tribal areas in late January 2008.[37] As for Bin Ladin, the "overall commander," W.O. was told by their handler Driss that it was "impossible to approach" him.[38]

According to W.O., the Belgian and French recruits were asked to fill out a contract by their handlers, illustrating that al-Qa`ida's penchant for paperwork has remained intact over the years.[39]

The three page form, which they signed, included questions on their marriage status, health, criminal convictions, and whether or not they wanted to become suicide bombers.[40] It also set out precise rules for their conduct in FATA such as the need to unquestioningly obey orders. They were told that they would be punished if they failed to adhere to the contract.[41]

According to the interrogation report, W.O. stated that early on in their stay, their group, with the exception of Beyayo who had fallen ill, completed a two week training course, much of it inside a residence. They received both religious instruction and military training from Egyptian and Syrian instructors. Their military trainer taught them how to assemble weapons, fire rocket launchers, and how to handle explosives. He even set off a small charge of TNT in demonstration, telling them that the explosive was used to attack U.S. convoys in Afghanistan and in suicide vests. They each had to pay 400 euros for the course, which included

"Al-Qa`ida propaganda led him to believe that fighters lived in groupings of more than 50 in an area; the reality was that fighters were grouped together in units of 10 or less."

rent for the dwelling. This illustrates the degree of self-motivation and self-organization that can be required in recruits traveling to FATA.

W.O. described the training as "an enrollment amongst the Taliban and Al Qaeda." According to his account, Pakistani Taliban fighters mixed freely with al-Qa`ida operatives in FATA, illustrating the close connections between the two groups. According to both W.O. and Beyayo, most of the Belgian and French jihadists never received "approval" to fight

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28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, Brussels, February 2009.

31 Personal interview, Belgian intelligence official, December 2008; Personal interview, U.S. counterterrorism official, March 2009.

32 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, Brussels, February 2009.

33 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation.

34 Ibid.

35 Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009.

36 W.O. stated that the largest group of foreign fighters in FATA was from East Turkestan in northwest China. He also stated that there were two Uzbek groups operating in FATA numbering a total of around 3,000 fighters, and two Kurdish groups.

37 "U.S. Officials: CIA Kills Top Al Qaeda Terrorist in Pakistan," CNN, January 31, 2008.

38 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation.

39 In the years before 9/11, al-Qa`ida required recruits to fill out copious amounts of paperwork. See Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral history of Al Qaeda's Leader* (Washington, D.C.: Free Press, 2006).

40 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation. The contract did not have the insignia of any particular militant group.

41 Ibid.

in Afghanistan. During the next few months, they moved from dwelling to dwelling in the mountains of North and South Waziristan, frustrated at being kept away from the fighting over the border. Garsallaoui, according to both accounts, eventually received approval to fight in Afghanistan.[42] W.O. stated that he was surprised by the lack of large groupings of fighters in the tribal areas. Al-Qa`ida propaganda led him to believe that fighters lived in groupings of more than 50 in an area; the reality was that fighters were grouped together in units of 10 or less.[43]

During his time in FATA, Beyayo claims he had to move frequently to avoid being targeted by U.S. Predator drones. The strikes had a reputation in jihadist circles of being "very effective."[44] Garsallaoui was almost hit by such a strike, according to an intercepted e-mail he sent his wife.[45] The French and Belgian recruits were told not to venture outside their dwellings because spies would pass on the coordinates of suspected jihadists to the Americans.[46] The accounts corroborate a recent judgment by U.S. intelligence agencies that the strikes, intensified in the second half of 2008, have put significant pressure on al-Qa`ida in FATA.[47]

Communications with Europe

The case reveals that terrorist operatives in the Afghan-Pakistan border region can maintain contact with the outside world relatively easily. Garsallaoui, for example, was in regular e-mail contact with his wife, Malika el-Aroud, from the Afghan-Pakistan border region, and sometimes even by Skype.[48] He also periodically tuned in to the forums on his wife's website Minbar SOS, even

sending an e-mail from Afghanistan explaining why he was fighting jihad.[49]

One of the e-mails Garsallaoui sent to his wife, intercepted by U.S. counterterrorism agencies in the first half of 2008, contained a photograph of himself firing a rocket launcher somewhere in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.[50] The picture, later posted on el-Aroud's website, was clearly useful for propaganda purposes.

> ## "During his time in FATA, Beyayo claims he had to move around frequently to avoid being targeted by U.S. Predator drones. The strikes had a reputation in jihadist circles of being 'very effective.'"

Garsallaoui, posing in a "Rambo" like stance, was glamorizing the fighting. In June, Garsallaoui sent el-Aroud an e-mail claiming to have killed five Americans in Afghanistan.[51] According to W.O., Garsallaoui told him when they met in July in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, that he had killed the Americans by firing a bazooka on a U.S. camp near the Pakistani border.[52]

On September 26, 2008, Garsallaoui urged attacks in Europe in an online statement on Minbar SOS. "The solution my brothers and sisters is not fatwas but booooooooms," the posting stated. His communication demonstrated al-Qa`ida's ability to instigate violence in the West from the Afghan-Pakistan border region.[53]

Return to Belgium

In the fall of 2008, Belgian security services were placed on alert after el-Ghanouti and Harrizi, Beyayo's friends from Anderlecht, returned from FATA.[54] On December 4, Beyayo returned to Belgium.[55] The trigger for the arrests was an e-mail sent by Beyayo three days later,[56] intercepted by U.S. counterterrorism agencies,[57] suggesting he had received the go-ahead for an operation in Belgium.[58] "It was impossible for Belgian authorities at this stage to take any risk," said the director of Belgian intelligence.[59]

On December 11, a week after Beyayo's return, police rounded up the alleged cell, including Malika el-Aroud. Yet when police raided 16 properties in Brussels and Liège, they found little evidence of an imminent attack.[60] Beyayo's lawyer, Marchand, said that the e-mail that triggered the arrests was just "tough" talk sent to an impress an ex-girlfriend and disputed the notion that the group may have been a "sleeper cell" sent back to Europe after deliberately being held back from the front lines.[61] Beyayo told him he returned to Belgium because he was frustrated at not being able to fight in Afghanistan, the uncomfortable living conditions, and bouts of sickness.[62] W.O., for his part, claimed that he grew frustrated with his handlers' repeated demands of payment.[63] Belgian authorities, however, insist that the alleged cell was a potential national

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42 Ibid.; Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, Brussels, February 2009.

43 Ibid.

44 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, Brussels, February 2009.

45 Ibid.

46 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation.

47 Director of National Intelligence Blair testified in February 2009 that "in the FATA Al Qaeda lost significant parts of its command structure since 2008 in a succession of blows as damaging to the group as any since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001."

48 Skype is an online communication website widely used around the world to make telephone calls by using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology.

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49 This information is based on the author's own monitoring of el-Aroud's website, Minbar SOS. According to private Belgian counterterrorism sources, his e-mail was intercepted by U.S. counterterrorism agencies.

50 Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009.

51 Robertson and Cruickshank.

52 This information was drawn from W.O.'s interrogation.

53 This information is based on the author's own monitoring of Minbar SOS.

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54 Dupont.

55 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, Brussels, February 2009.

56 Ibid.

57 Jean-Pierre Stroobants, "La cible visée par le groupe belge démantelé n'a pas été identifiée," *Le Monde*, December 18, 2008.

58 Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009.

59 Personal interview, Alain Winants, director of Belgium's State Security Service, Brussels, February 2009.

60 According to Belgian counterterrorism sources, no explosives, firearms, or attack blueprints were recovered.

61 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, Brussels, February 2009.

62 Personal interview, Christophe Marchand, New York, April 2009.

63 During his interrogation, W.O. said his handlers behaved like "hustlers." He claimed that in addition to charging 400 euros for training, they charged 900 euros per person for equipment and weapons.

security threat. All those charged deny the allegations against them and are set to face trial within the next year.[64] Garsallaoui is still at large and believed to be operating around the tribal areas of Pakistan, which is of great concern to Belgian counterterrorism officials.[65]

Conclusion
The Belgian case illustrates the continuing danger posed by al-Qa`ida's safe haven in FATA and the urgent need to tackle it. Accounts by those who traveled there do, however, suggest that the CIA's increased use of Predator strikes have put pressure on the Taliban and al-Qa`ida in FATA. While Belgian and U.S. intelligence agencies successfully tracked the Belgian cell, the increased numbers of Europeans traveling to FATA will require intensified efforts by Western intelligence agencies to track recruiting networks. "The big task for secret services," stressed Winants, is to "identify the network by which these people leave, where they got the logistical support to go there, and what they intend to do when they come back."[66]

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President Obama's Overseas Terrorism Challenge

By Tom Sanderson

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA leads the United States at a time of heightened global insecurity. Economic hardship is increasing the ranks of weak and failing states that could serve as sanctuaries or incubators for terrorist groups. Although the U.S. homeland has not been attacked since September 11, 2001, extremists in Europe, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia remain a serious threat. With the election of President Barack Obama, the United States and the world are expecting a new approach to countering terrorism.[1] Almost three months into his presidency, the Obama administration has "repackaged" some Bush administration strategies, while at the same time making it clear that development, diplomacy, and other policies will garner greater emphasis.

The administration should capitalize on a unique opportunity to emphasize Barack Obama's widely admired personal story and interest in engaging the world to weaken key elements of the al-Qa`ida "narrative." The weakening of this narrative could, in turn, reduce the terrorist group's recruitment capabilities and capacity to garner sympathy from the Muslim world. This article reviews the landscape of transnational terrorist threats and examines the Obama administration's early counterterrorism policies.

A Complex and Worsening Landscape
Despite the absence of an attack on U.S. soil since September 11, 2001, terrorism remains a threat and presents a great test for intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Since the September 11 attacks, al-Qa`ida has been damaged by effective Western policies to reduce its funding sources, the killing or capture of key personnel, and through its own excesses in Iraq. Nevertheless, it remains intact and potent. With proven global reach,

a robust propaganda arm, training facilities, unrelenting motivation, and like-minded confederates in North Africa, the Middle East and beyond, it remains a direct threat to nation-states.

For the past several years, the primary focus of terrorist activity has been Iraq and South Asia. With a phased pullout of U.S. and coalition forces from Iraq underway, American attention has shifted to Afghanistan and Pakistan as both countries descend further into turmoil. With Pakistan's lawless Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) serving as a terrorist safe haven, these two complex states play host to even more confounding insurgencies, elements of "al-Qa`ida central," and criminal warlords, among other destabilizing forces. Former President George W. Bush's deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism, Juan Zarate, described this conflict zone (in particular Pakistan) as "the greatest geo-political problem confronting the Obama administration with its FATA safe-haven, creeping radicalization, nuclear weapons, and accommodation of radicals."[2]

Pakistan, for its part, is both unwilling and unable to keep its territory from being used to launch attacks into Afghanistan, and is itself a target of extremist groups—many of which Islamabad had a direct hand in creating. Preoccupied by the potential for a fourth major war with its rival India—a country that has strengthened its relationship with the United States, and also its presence in Afghanistan—this tense situation is unlikely to change. Given the distinct possibility that the United States and other members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) may depart Afghanistan without having achieved clear victory, it is possible that al-Qa`ida would be revitalized for being perceived as the group responsible for such a defeat.

In addition to the abundance of violent groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, there are a number of other trouble spots. In Bangladesh, extremist movements, which have already targeted the civilian leadership of Prime

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64 Robertson and Cruickshank.

65 Personal interviews, Belgian counterterrorism officials, Brussels, January and February 2009.

66 Personal interview, Alain Winants, director of Belgium's State Security Service, Brussels, February 2009.

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1 The anticipation for change was a result of Obama's early statements about the planned closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, the closure of CIA secret detention centers, and the repudiation of controversial interrogation techniques such as waterboarding.

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2 This statement was made by Juan C. Zarate at a Center for Strategic and International Studies roundtable on March 11, 2009.

Minister Sheikh Hasina, could take advantage of a nation in turmoil that in February 2009 witnessed a mutiny by its own border guards.[3] Coupled with severe stress on the environment, high levels of corruption, and a crowded population living in poverty and despair, Bangladesh is a dark cloud on the horizon.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, has made strides in countering al-Qa`ida and its supporters since the attacks inside the kingdom began in earnest in May 2003. With thousands arrested and a "disengagement" program targeting young radicals, these developments,

> **"With a Kenyan father, a middle name of 'Hussein,' and a childhood education in Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim-majority country—President Obama shatters much of the negative imagery that some associate with executive leadership and power in the United States."**

according to U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair, "have rendered the kingdom a harsh operating environment for al-Qa'ida."[4]

The greater regional threat is on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula in lawless Yemen, home to the largest contingent of prisoners still detained at Guantanamo Bay. A weak state, Yemen is host to extremists who operate with relative impunity in towns and across large areas of ungoverned tribal territory. It is from Yemen that many experts inside and outside of the government anticipate future plots against the West and its Arab allies. There are also signs

that Yemeni militants affiliated with al-Qa`ida have traveled to nearby Somalia to collaborate with an al-Qa`ida-affiliated group of Islamist militants known as al-Shabab.[5]

Despite the serious damage suffered by al-Qa`ida, the group continues to benefit from a widely held perception that the West is leading a "Crusade" to destroy Islam and to occupy and exploit traditional Muslim lands. The global downturn, widely blamed on American "greed" and "arrogance," will serve to reinforce this argument and prove to be valuable propaganda for extremists. Usama bin Ladin himself has reportedly used the U.S. financial crisis as a propaganda tool, claiming that "the United States is staggering under the attacks of the mujahidin and their consequences…It is drowning in a financial crisis, so much so that it is begging from big and small countries alike."[6] With global unemployment surging, and crackdowns by anxious leaders worsening, this economic turn of events injects vigor and seeming validity into these arguments.[7]

Resetting the Counterterrorism Strategy?
With these conditions and threats facing the United States and its allies, the Obama administration needs an aggressive counterterrorism strategy, but one that is mindful of other foreign policy initiatives and of the message they deliver. It is to be expected that any new approach will be characterized by a more nuanced attitude from the White House. Much of Barack Obama's popularity at home and abroad stems from his pre-election repudiation of certain Bush administration-era tactics and strategies against terrorist groups. Given the damaged reputation of al-Qa`ida—best visible by its erosion of support in Iraq—and the enthusiasm with which the world has greeted the new U.S. administration, there is an opportunity to make gains.

At first glance, the Obama administration's initial few decisions might cause confusion as to where the president stands on controversial policies. While President Obama quickly ordered the closing of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and directed all U.S. intelligence officers not to exceed the interrogation techniques found in the U.S. Army Field Manual, other decisions have signaled that some Bush administration policies will be kept in place or only altered slightly. A review of still emerging policies reveals broad objectives and continued, though modified, tactics.

President Bush's 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism included four main pillars: 1) Prevent attacks by terrorist networks; 2) Deny WMD to rogue states and terrorist allies who seek to use them; 3) Deny terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states; and 4) Deny terrorists control of any nation they would use as a base and launching pad for terror.[8] The Bush administration also strongly stressed "democracy promotion" as the long-term antidote to terrorism. The military, intelligence, financial, law enforcement, and diplomatic arms of the United States played key roles in carrying out these policies, although too much emphasis was probably placed on the military options. Some of the most controversial tactics employed by the United States included "extraordinary renditions" of terrorism suspects (a policy begun under President William J. Clinton);[9] the use of interrogation techniques, such as "waterboarding," that have been described as "torture"; warrantless surveillance of communication between terrorism suspects and U.S. citizens; the indefinite detention of suspects at Guantanamo Bay or in CIA secret overseas prisons; the suspension of habeas corpus for suspects; and the designation of captured individuals as "enemy combatants." Even though some of these tactics ended before President Obama entered office—including the

3 Julfikar Ali Manik and Somini Sengupta, "Army's Border Guards Rebel in Bangladesh," *New York Times*, February 25, 2009.

4 Dennis C. Blair, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 12, 2009.

5 "Qaeda Bomber Behind Yemen Attack Trained in Somalia," Reuters, March 17, 2009.

6 On January 14, 2009, a new audiotape purportedly by Usama bin Ladin appeared on Islamist web forums. Bin Ladin claimed that the United States is "drowning in a financial crisis," partly as a result of "mujahidin" attacks.

7 Michael T. Klare, "A Planet at the Brink: Will Economic Brushfires Prove Too Virulent to Contain?" TomDispatch.com, February 24, 2009.

8 George W. Bush, "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," White House National Security Council, September 2006.

9 "Fact Sheet: Extraordinary Rendition," American Civil Liberties Union, December 6, 2005; Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

practice of waterboarding[10] and the CIA's use of secret prisons[11]—it has been widely recognized that they caused damage to the U.S. reputation abroad.

While President Obama is canceling some Bush administration counterterrorism policies, a complete scrapping is not likely. The differences between the two presidents do not extend to the core policy of preventing attacks on the United States and its citizens, but rather to some of the techniques noted above, and to the manner with which the United States pursues its goals. President Obama and his national security team, which includes several individuals who served in the Bush administration, recognize the threat posed by al-Qa`ida and other groups, especially those seeking WMD capabilities. The Obama administration, for example, has allowed the CIA to continue the practice of rendition to cooperating third countries, but is seeking stronger, more reliable assurances that suspects will not be tortured while in foreign custody.[12] Other actions reflect the Obama administration's acceptance of Bush administration views on the global, borderless nature of counterterrorism. This is evident from comments made during the U.S. Senate confirmation hearings for Attorney General Eric Holder and for U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan who both suggested that the terrorism "battlefield" extends to areas where individuals may be arrested for providing a range of support to terrorist groups.[13]

Additionally, while the Obama administration has halted the use of the most extreme interrogation tactics, his CIA Director Leon Panetta noted in his February 6, 2009 nomination testimony

that "if we had a ticking-bomb situation, and obviously, whatever was being used I felt was not sufficient, I would not hesitate to go to the president of the United States and request whatever additional authority I would need."[14] The new administration has also continued—if not increased—Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) strikes, and is targeting the Pakistani Taliban, specifically the Baitullah Mehsud network.[15] While this may arguably complicate counterinsurgency efforts by inflaming public sentiment and generating additional recruits for Taliban-affiliated militias, the Predator strikes are one of the only tools at America's disposal for killing al-Qa`ida and Taliban leaders and operators who are attacking U.S., NATO, Afghan, and Pakistani targets.[16]

The Obama Administration's Early Moves

While the new administration's counterterrorism strategy is yet to be fully determined, the official White House webpage on homeland security provides the broad outlines of its approach to overseas radicalism and terrorism. The strategy pays particular attention to restoring widely-admired American values and standards that many allege were eroded during the last eight years of the unpopularly named "global war on terrorism." Five key points of the strategy[17] are:

1. Find, Disrupt, and Destroy Al-Qa`ida;
2. New Capabilities to Aggressively Defeat Terrorists;
3. Prepare the Military to Meet 21st Century Threats;
4. Win the Battle of Ideas;
5. Restore American Influence and Restore Our Values.

Perhaps one of the most powerful and promising developments in counterterrorism is the direct challenge that Barack Obama's ascendancy to power and collaborative approach represents to al-Qa`ida's legitimacy. President Bush's controversial policies and public persona appeared to serve as an effective recruiting and propaganda tool for Usama bin Ladin

> "The Predator strikes are one of the only tools at America's disposal for killing al-Qa`ida and Taliban leaders and operators who are attacking U.S., NATO, Afghan, and Pakistani targets."

and the extremists who rallied young Muslim men and women on his behalf. President Obama was immediately and crudely insulted by Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qa`ida's second-in-command, upon his election victory in November 2008. Al-Zawahiri called President-elect Obama a "house negro," suggesting that he would in fact be doing the bidding of a presumably racist, white America. This was a clear attempt to denigrate an individual whose personal story undermines the penetrating and persistent al-Qa`ida narrative.

Indeed, the new U.S. president is an American minority who has risen to the highest seat of power. With a Kenyan father, a middle name of "Hussein," and a childhood education in Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim-majority country—President Obama shatters much of the negative imagery that some associate with executive leadership and power in the United States. His personal background, combined with the traditional influence enjoyed by the United States, serves to multiply the power and authority typically available to a U.S. president. In fact, a 17-nation poll conducted by the British Broadcasting Corporation on the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration showed "widespread and growing optimism that his presidency will lead to improved

10 The last known case of waterboarding in the United States occurred in 2003. See Renee Schoof, "CIA Director Acknowledges Use of Water Boarding," McClatchy Newspapers, February 5, 2008.

11 Don Gonyea, "Bush Concedes CIA Ran Secret Prisons Abroad," National Public Radio, September 6, 2006.

12 This is considered by many to be either naïve or disingenuous given the realities of interrogation practiced by some of the United States' more aggressive partners. For more, see Greg Miller, "Obama Preserves Renditions as Counter-Terrorism Tool," Los Angeles Times, February 1, 2009.

13 Charlie Savage, "Obama's War on Terror May Resemble Bush's in Some Areas," New York Times, February 18, 2009.

14 CIA Director Panetta did agree, however, that waterboarding constituted torture. For more, see Mark Mazzetti, "Pick for CIA Chief Leaves Open Idea of Harsher Interrogation," International Herald Tribune, February 6, 2009.

15 Mark Mazzetti and David Sanger, "Obama Expands Missile Strikes Inside Pak," New York Times, February 20, 2009.

16 "Kilcullen Weighs in on U.S. Strikes in Pakistan," Weekly Standard, February 10, 2009.

17 This information is drawn from the White House's Homeland Security Agenda, available at www.white-house.gov/agenda/homeland_security/.

relations between the United States and the rest of the world," with 67% of poll respondents expressing positive views of the president-elect.[18]

This could mark a great opportunity to weaken al-Qa`ida's appeal. Just as *fatawa* by senior Muslim clerics around the world have questioned the legitimacy of al-Qa`ida's actions and reduced its standing among some Muslim populations, so too can Barack Obama's life story and worldwide admiration.

> **"Pointing to the weaknesses and contradictions in al-Qa`ida's message, while dispensing with any self-defeating U.S. policies, will increase the chances of success by weakening Muslim support for al-Qa`ida."**

Progress in reducing al-Qa`ida's appeal began while President Bush was in office, and President Obama can quickly build on that momentum. Pointing to the weaknesses and contradictions in al-Qa`ida's message, while dispensing with any self-defeating U.S. policies, will increase the chances of success by weakening Muslim support for al-Qa`ida. Furthermore, the bolstering of America's image and cancellation or modification of some controversial policies could certainly lead more countries to cooperate with the United States.[19]

Conclusion
A multitude of stresses are impacting vulnerable populations around the world, leaving many open to extremist ideologies that energize marginalized people. It is clear that this trend will continue in the current economic climate.

There is an unmistakable tension between the West and Muslim and Arab worlds where a sense of humiliation and exploitation remains strong. One of the most important goals of U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy will be to "communicate to the Muslim world that the U.S. is not at war with them," but rather is interested in greater partnership on many levels.[20] Achieving this goal will reduce the ability of al-Qa`ida and similar organizations to garner sympathy from Muslim populations, and thereby limit their capacity to recruit new members. There is now an effort to redesign U.S. policy, and by doing so the Obama administration can maintain a strong campaign against terrorism while avoiding mistakes that indirectly assist U.S. adversaries. This efficiency of policy is essential given the continued advantages of extremist groups and the worsening global environment that supports their arguments. It is likely that the United States and the world will see an ever more enhanced and sophisticated terrorist threat, and an equally refined approach to counterterrorism.

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Improving India's Counterterrorism Policy after Mumbai

By Paul Staniland

INDIA HAS EMERGED as one of the world's most consistent targets of Islamist militants. Although the Mumbai attacks of November 2008 attracted the most global attention, they were merely the most recent and dramatic in a series of bloody terrorist incidents throughout urban India. On July 11, 2006, for example, terrorists planted seven bombs on the Suburban Railway of Mumbai, causing the deaths of more than 200 people. The November 2008 attacks, however, brought into clear focus the inability of the Indian security apparatus to anticipate and appropriately respond to major terrorist incidents. As one prominent analyst wrote, the government's responses to the Mumbai attacks were "comprehensive failures from the point of view of India's security establishment."[1] While some Indian analysts and politicians prefer to focus on Pakistan's role as a haven for a variety of militant groups, it is clear that India needs to dramatically enhance its domestic counterterrorism infrastructure. Improvement will require significant infusions of resources, policy consistency, and political will that are often lacking in India.

This article outlines the current structure of counterterrorism policy in India, and then assesses some possible reforms. Thoroughgoing institutional reform in India will be challenging. The country suffers from a fragmented and inefficient bureaucracy, far fewer resources than developed countries even though it faces a higher threat level, and a political elite focused primarily on electoral politics. It is likely only a matter of time before another significant terrorist attack occurs. Nevertheless, focusing on a series of substantial but distinct tasks, with the support of India's international partners, can slowly but steadily improve India's counterterrorism capabilities.

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18 "Global Poll Uncovers Growing Optimism that Obama Will Improve US Relations," BBC, January 20, 2009.

19 On the other hand, it could also cause some governments to refrain from providing intelligence to a new U.S. administration that is critical of harsh tactics.

20 Steve Simon and Daniel Byman et al., *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008).

1 Ajai Sahni, "The Uneducable Indian," *Outlook*, December 1, 2008.

Domestic Structure and Capabilities

India's police and internal security system is highly fragmented and often poorly coordinated. The country's federal political system leaves most policing responsibilities to the states, which usually possess their own counterterrorism and intelligence units. These forces, especially local police, are often poorly trained and equipped. Local personnel are frequently hired on the basis of political patronage and are notorious for high levels of corruption.

There is also a variety of central investigative, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies. The Ministry of Home Affairs includes the Intelligence Bureau, Central Reserve Police Force, Indian Police Service, and new National Investigation Agency, while the Research and Analysis Wing and Central Bureau of Investigation are answerable to the prime minister.[2] The military—which

> **"Mumbai brought into clear focus the inability of the Indian security apparatus to anticipate and appropriately respond to major terrorist incidents."**

is primarily geared toward foreign threats, including terrorism—also generates intelligence with relevance to domestic terrorism, and there is a centrally controlled National Security Guard (NSG) that specializes in hostage and terrorist attack situations.

The combination of state and central authorities is ostensibly coordinated through joint committees, task forces, subsidiary intelligence bureaus, and a Multi-Agency Center. All of these coordinating mechanisms aim to harmonize the intelligence gathered by these agencies and to generate shared threat perceptions and associated responses, but they are often slow and

cumbersome. States and the central agencies frequently compete over resources and bureaucratic autonomy, and they both do a highly uneven job of cooperating with one another.[3] In addition to these organizational challenges, many of the security institutions at all levels of government are understaffed, undertrained, and technologically backward.[4]

All of these pathologies were evident in the failure to prevent or appropriately respond to the Mumbai attacks.[5] There was in fact significant intelligence suggesting a seaborne terrorist attack was likely, and even that prominent sites such as the Taj Hotel would be targeted. This information, however, was ignored by several key bureaucratic actors—including the Coast Guard and the Maharashtra state director-general of police—because it was deemed unactionable.[6] Others, such as the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad, at least attempted some kind of preparation.[7] The differences in readiness highlight the extent of fragmentation among the security apparatus. Even when Mumbai police tried to take preventive action, they lacked the manpower to sustain increased security at the hotels. Once the attack occurred, the security forces did not have sufficient night-vision equipment, heavy weaponry, or information about the attack sites, leading to a long response time and the emergence of a disastrous siege.[8]

Previous attempts at reform and improvement have been largely inadequate—politicians have made

sweeping rhetorical claims, juggled personnel at all levels, and repeatedly promised better coordination at the national level, but key capacity has not improved. Mumbai finally triggered the resignation of Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, on whose watch a series of previous attacks had occurred. Yet Patil's resignation and his replacement by the more competent Palaniappan Chidambaram (who worked on internal security under Rajiv Gandhi) marks only the beginning of the necessary changes. India faces a "dire need to redress its numerous deficiencies in its internal security arrangements."[9]

The Nature of the Threat: Domestic and Foreign

One common response to India's counterterrorism failures has been a quick acknowledgement of domestic weaknesses, followed by a far more vocal demand to "get tough" on Pakistan. While Pakistan's role as a sanctuary (both voluntary and involuntary) for militants is indisputable, India's options are relatively limited. The coercive diplomacy following the December 13, 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, named Operation Parakram, did not prevent Pakistan's continued patronage of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba and other militant groups operating in Kashmir.[10] Pakistan's nuclear weapon "shield" makes credible Indian coercive diplomacy difficult.

India's current government has learned this lesson well, and instead engaged in a coordinated diplomatic offensive that has brought at least rhetorical results. Military threats against Pakistan are unlikely to bear fruit, while even successful diplomacy will have a limited impact.[11] Pakistan simply lacks the capacity, and probably the will, to engage in the kind of domestic policies that will significantly lessen the threat posed to India. Improving India's internal security apparatus must therefore be the primary focus of Indian security and

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2 A critical analysis of the Ministry of Home Affairs forces can be found in K.S. Subramanian, *Political Violence and the Police in India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2007). For a brief overview of RAW, see Jayshree Bajoria, "RAW: India's External Intelligence Agency," Council on Foreign Relations, November 7, 2008.

3 "Securing the Home Front," *India Today*, January 12, 2009.

4 On the understaffing of police, see P. Chidambaran, "A Clear Command Structure," *Outlook*, January 6, 2009.

5 Vijay Oberoi, "Never Again," *Indian Express*, December 2, 2008.

6 Saikat Datta, Smruti Koppikar and Dola Mitra, "The Armies of the Night," *Outlook*, December 15, 2008.

7 The Mumbai police put extra guard on prominent sites and met with hotel officials. The extra guard was not maintained, however, because of the strain it put on manpower. Praveen Swami, "Pointed Intelligence Warnings Preceded Attacks," *Hindu*, November 30, 2008.

8 "'Rot' at Heart of Indian Intelligence," BBC, December 2, 2008; Praveen Swami, "Lethal Lapse," *Frontline*, December 6-19, 2008; Saikat Datta, Smruti Koppikar and Dola Mitra, "The Armies of the Night," *Outlook*, December 15, 2008.

9 Angel Rabasa et al., *The Lessons of Mumbai* (Washington, D.C.: RAND Corporation, 2009), p. 15.

10 On Parakram and its aftermath, see V.K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney, *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003); P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen P. Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007).

11 Rabasa et al., p. 21.

political elites.[12] In addition to Pakistan, India also faces cross-border terrorism from Bangladesh. Attacks attributed to jihadist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI) are believed to have been launched from the country. Bangladesh's political instability and weak state capacity, however, make it difficult for India to consistently shape Bangladeshi counterterrorism policy.

In addition to the limits of putting pressure on Pakistan and Bangladesh, a number of major attacks have been carried out with significant help from Indian Muslims under the aegis of the Indian Mujahidin (IM). This clearly shows that the problem is not simply one of containing Pakistan.[13] The Indian police and intelligence agencies were forced to scramble in the wake of bombings in Jaipur, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and elsewhere claimed by the IM, which revealed a significant indigenous capability for terrorism. Bolstering domestic intelligence will become increasingly central if a trend of radicalization continues among small, but potentially growing portions of India's Muslim community. Although there have been pockets of radicalization uncovered as far south as Kerala, on balance it seems that urban areas of north and west India have been the primary recruiting grounds for Islamist radicals.[14]

Therefore, India faces threats spilling out of porous borders and weak governments both to the east and to the west. These foreign threats coalesce with a troubled internal security apparatus and some level of domestic radicalization to create a dangerous situation.

The Path Forward: Coordination and Capacity-Building

The major domestic response to Mumbai has been an emphasis on streamlined coordination between agencies across state and federal lines, and the creation of a new National Investigation Agency (NIA).[15] The aim of the NIA is to empower a federal agency to investigate major crimes such as terrorism and organized crime without having to be asked to do so by the states. There will be special courts that can rapidly hear terror-related cases.[16] The NIA will be filled out by new staff drawn

> **"Once the attack occurred, the security forces did not have sufficient night-vision equipment, heavy weaponry, or information about the attack sites, leading to a long response time and the emergence of a disastrous siege."**

from existing intelligence and law enforcement agencies throughout India. An infusion of funding and personnel into the overall security apparatus has also been promised, and the NSG has been deployed throughout the country to offer a quicker response to future attacks.[17] These steps represent a useful beginning. These efforts on their own, however, will lead to little substantive results unless they have three major characteristics.

First, they will need to be sustained over a long period of time. Dramatically bolstering the institutional capacity of India's counterterrorism apparatus is a task of at least half a decade, and probably longer.[18] The training of new and current personnel alone is an enormous task, much less properly

equipping them. A new federal agency or set of laws will contribute little to this fundamental task unless they are able to sustain the momentum necessary for years of unglamorous but crucial training and institution-building. Locking in lines of budgetary approval over a 5-10 year period will be critical to avoid the effort falling victim to the vicissitudes of domestic politics and elections.

Second, reform efforts must be properly resourced. India is a poor country with many pressing needs, and security funding reflects India's lack of wealth. Compared to the budgets of even much smaller developed countries, India simply does not provide sufficient money for its security agencies on a per capita basis.[19] This causes them to undertrain and understaff their personnel, leading to corruption and a reliance on crude and often counterproductive policing techniques. International assistance, in the form of grants for training and equipping police forces, could reduce the impact of this reform on India's budget. In the current economic environment, large-scale international aid is unlikely, but small measures could make a significant difference, particularly if focused on the cities most likely to be attacked in the future (Delhi and Mumbai).

Finally, India's political leadership must exert the will to push past bureaucratic and state-centric rivalries. This is an enormous challenge for a political class focused above all else on the cut-throat electoral competition that characterizes Indian politics. Despite these challenges, maintaining a degree of consistency and follow-through is essential so that the reform process does not stall or end up wasting huge amounts of time and money. Government ministers must not allow themselves to be used as pawns in bureaucratic battles over turf, resources, and responsibilities. Specialized task forces led by elected officials, and supported at the highest levels, must be given the power to engage in oversight over the security apparatus. This will involve overcoming a traditional aversion to transparency on the part of the police and intelligence agencies.

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12 As Shishir Gupta notes, "Pakistan is only part of the problem." See Shishir Gupta, "Less Blame, More Action," *Indian Express*, December 5, 2008.

13 Animesh Roul, "India's Home-Grown Jihadi Threat: A Profile of the Indian Mujahideen," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:4 (2009).

14 These are the areas of greatest Muslim demographic presence and also of communal rioting. Although firm data is elusive, many experts argue that the 2002 Gujarat riots have propelled Islamist recruitment. For more, see "India Fears that Some of its Muslims are Joining in Terrorism," *New York Times*, August 9, 2006; "Ahmedabad Attacks: The Usual Suspects," *Hindu*, August 1, 2008.

15 The NIA is discussed in R.K. Raghavan, "Terror Trackers," *Frontline*, January 3-16, 2009.

16 "Govt Tables Bill to Set Up National Investigation Agency," *Times of India*, December 16, 2008.

17 "NSG Inks Agreements with Eight Airlines," *Hindu*, March 1, 2009.

18 See the quote by Praveen Swami in "Will India's Security Overhaul Work?" BBC, December 11, 2008.

19 Sahni, "Uneducable Indian," argues that the police-to-population ratio in India is 125:100,000.

Given these deep challenges, the Indian leadership is best advised to manage a pair of distinct projects—first, building on the short-term changes in coordination that can leverage existing assets and capabilities, and second, engaging in the much lengthier and broader task of improving training and technical capacities across India's security apparatus. Conflating the two into one grand reform agenda is likely to slow both down and undermine the overall effort. India must pursue a series of discrete, manageable tasks if it is to fortify itself against the threats flowing both from across the border and from among its own population.

An American Role

The United States can play a helpful role in bolstering India's counterterrorism capabilities.[20] There has already been extensive cooperation between the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and Indian security services in the wake of Mumbai, illustrating the dramatic improvement in Indo-U.S. relations.[21] There has also been increased intelligence sharing with India, most of it obviously related to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The relationship should move beyond investigative collaboration and intelligence sharing into a broader project of training and capacity building. One of the traditional strengths of the U.S. law enforcement establishment has been training other countries' police and domestic intelligence forces. India would benefit enormously from even a small, but sustained program bringing Indian police to the United States for training, and sending American trainers to India to lecture on successful practices. This could be a small program aimed at providing specialized training to state and federal police.

Even basic training would have a broader effect of increasing the professionalism of India's domestic security forces. In addition to helping to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks, increased professionalism might reduce the resentment of the security forces in parts of the Indian Muslim community, which perceive the police as indiscriminate and brutal.[22] Small but meaningful grants could also be provided for training and equipping police forces.

Preparing for the Inevitable

Even if significant reform and Indo-U.S. cooperation emerge, however, it is likely that India will be hit once again with a significant terrorist attack. One of the key challenges after the event will be avoiding yet another cycle of rhetorically compelling but under-resourced, soon-forgotten institutional reform. There will be further risks of an Indo-Pakistan crisis spiraling out of control after a dramatic incident.

The United States and India's other partners can be a constituency advocating a certain degree of continuity to avoid disruptive policy shifts that undermine imperfect but existing reform efforts, while actively trying to reduce tensions on the subcontinent. The process of bolstering Indian counterterrorism capabilities will be long and difficult, and is unlikely to bring any sudden successes, but it is nevertheless essential.

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Leveraging History in AQIM Communications

By Lianne Kennedy Boudali

AL-QA`IDA IN THE Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), is one of the most active al-Qa`ida affiliate organizations. The group's primary goal is to overthrow the Algerian regime in favor of Shari`a-based governance and to end foreign influence in North Africa. Since its declaration of allegiance to Usama bin Ladin in the fall of 2006 and subsequent name change in January 2007, AQIM has largely maintained its prior operational focus on the Algerian state, while simultaneously adopting tactics such as suicide attacks and sophisticated roadside bombs that are reminiscent of al-Qa`ida and its global affiliates.

AQIM's communications have evolved significantly in the last two years in both content and sophistication, undoubtedly due in part to the fact that it has developed a relationship with al-Qa`ida's al-Fajr Media Center. AQIM remains dedicated to the removal of the "apostate" Algerian government, yet its messages increasingly reflect al-Qa`ida's orientation toward transnational jihadist activity, as evidenced by frequent references to the "Zionist-Crusader Alliance" and the need to re-establish a caliphate. In short, AQIM's communications reflect both local and international jihadist concerns.

One of the rhetorical devices by which AQIM bridges local and international grievances is the use of references to historical figures whose military exploits in the North African context resonate on both levels of analysis. This article will explore how AQIM has sought to bolster its legitimacy through repeated references to these well-known historical figures.

Heroic Figures in North African History

AQIM's communications mention historical figures whose heroic actions on behalf of Islam are known to Muslims in North Africa and elsewhere. Some of these figures—such as Tariq bin Ziyad, Yusuf bin Tashfin, and `Uqba bin Nafi—are military heroes from Islam's seventh

20 Lisa Curtis, "After Mumbai: Time to Strengthen US-India Counterterrorism Cooperation," Heritage Foundation, December 9, 2008.

21 "FBI Sends Agents to Mumbai," *Wall Street Journal*, November 28, 2008. Also see the testimony by FBI Chief Intelligence Officer Donald Van Duyn before the Senate on January 8, 2009 outlining the FBI's investigation in Mumbai, available at www.fbi.gov/congress/congress09/vanduyn010809.htm.

22 Somini Sengupta, "As Indian Police Crack Down After Bombings, Mistrust Grows," *International Herald Tribune*, October 3, 2008.

century conquests in North Africa and Europe. Others are revered for their role in resisting colonial influence in the 19th and 20th centuries; these figures include `Umar al-Mukhtar, who fought Italian involvement in Libya, and `Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi, who resisted French and Spanish involvement in Northern Morocco. All of these leaders are remembered for their roles in combat, conquest, and the defense of Islam against occupying forces.

AQIM references them for a number of reasons: to link successful historic military campaigns to current terrorist activity, to demonstrate a continuity

> **"All of these figures are either military heroes who played a key role in expanding the territory of the early caliphates, or contemporary folk heroes honored for their role in fighting colonial European forces."**

of opposition to Western forces and interests, to claim an ancestral linkage to revered historical figures, and to demonstrate the permanent nature of their struggle. AQIM is not alone in seeking to trade on these figures' appeal: Tariq bin Ziyad in particular has been mentioned in speeches by Usama bin Ladin and Hussayn bin Mahmud, the latter of whom is a popular commentator on jihadist web forums. A brief review of the historical figures in question will illuminate AQIM's reasons for choosing these individuals.

`Uqba bin Nafi was an Arab general of the Umayya Caliphate who led the initial conquest of North Africa in 662 AD. His forces established the city of Kairouan in Tunisia, which was the first new Islamic city in North Africa.[1] According to Arab historians, when he reached the Atlantic Ocean in 682, he rode his horse into the waters, exclaiming, "Oh God, if the sea had not prevented me, I would

have galloped on forever like Alexander the Great, upholding your faith and fighting the unbelievers!" From AQIM's perspective, Bin Nafi is relevant because of his role in securing North Africa as Islamic territory. AQIM argues that it is defending this same territory against infidels and apostates, thus framing its violence as an extension of Bin Nafi's original conquest.

Tariq bin Ziyad was a Berber military commander who landed his forces in Spain in 711 and brought the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus) under control of the Umayya Caliphate within several months.[2] Bin Ziyad was eventually defeated in 732 at the Battle of Poitiers, but he is remembered as one of Islam's great military heroes.[3] AQIM references Bin Ziyad because his military conquests remind audiences that Spain was once part of ancient Muslim empires, implying that it is a contemporary duty to reclaim this lost territory.

Yusuf bin Tashfin greatly expanded the Muslim Almoravid dynasty in North Africa between 1074 and 1106. His empire eventually included present-day Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, and parts of Algeria and the Sahel. In 1086, the Muslim rulers of al-Andalus asked Bin Tashfin to bring his forces to Spain to fight encroaching Spanish Christian armies. Bin Tashfin's forces won a key battle at Zalaqa (Sagrajas) and Bin Tashfin later annexed most of al-Andalus to his own empire, displacing the previous Muslim rulers. Bin Tashfin, like Bin Ziyad, was Berber, and he enforced a strict interpretation of Islamic law. AQIM refers to Bin Tashfin because he was the ruler of a mighty Islamic empire that included southern Spain, and also because he was a native North African known for his puritanical zeal. He is, therefore, a perfect role model for what AQIM would like to accomplish in North Africa today.

`Umar al-Mukhtar, a Qur'anic instructor by trade, led Libyan resistance to Italian colonization from 1912 to 1931, when he was captured and later executed.[4] Al-Mukhtar was considered a master of

guerrilla desert warfare, and his nearly 20-year campaign against colonial forces made him a North African folk hero. AQIM includes references to him because he holds particular appeal to Libyans (AQIM seeks to incorporate regional jihadist factions under its umbrella) and because his anti-colonial activity serves as an example for current generations seeking to eliminate foreign influence in North Africa.

`Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi was a Moroccan Islamic judge who resisted French and Spanish colonial forces in the Rif Mountains of Morocco. He inflicted a humiliating defeat on a large contingent of invading Spanish forces in 1921, and later established an independent Islamic emirate that strictly enforced Shari`a.[5] Although he was defeated in 1926 by combined French and Spanish forces, he was considered an exemplar of resistance to colonial occupation and an early proponent of Salafism in Morocco. Al-Khattabi's piety, his

> **"By framing AQIM's actions as a continuation of Islam's past battles, `Abd al-Wadud seeks to create a direct linkage between his group's terrorism and the glories of the past."**

military success against external forces, and his establishment of an independent emirate make him, like Bin Tashfin, a model for what AQIM would like to achieve in North Africa.

All of these figures are either military heroes who played a key role in expanding the territory of the early caliphates, or contemporary folk heroes honored for their role in fighting colonial European forces. They suit AQIM's purposes because they are known for military actions in North Africa and Europe against non-Muslim forces, as well as for their role in establishing various forms of Islamic rule in North Africa.

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1 C.R. Pennell, *Morocco: From Empire to Independence* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003).

2 Ibid.

3 The name Gibraltar comes from the Arabic *Jebel Tariq*, or Tariq's mountain.

4 John Wright, *Libya: A Modern History* (Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

5 Pennell.

Leveraging the Appeal of Historical Heroes
Between January 2007 and January 2009, AQIM communications have mentioned one or more of these historical figures on at least 10 separate occasions. These references have been made by several different AQIM officials, including *amir* Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud (also known as Abdelmalek Droukdel), Shari`a committee member Abu `Ubayda Yusuf, and media spokesman Salah Abu Muhammad. `Abd al-Wadud has mentioned Yusuf bin Tashfin six times and referred to Tariq bin Ziyad and `Uqba bin Nafi four times each in the past two years. Other AQIM officials frequently refer to all three figures at once, as well as other historical figures such as Musa bin Nusayr, `Abd al-Hamid bin Badis, and al-Mu'iz bin Badis. The AQIM media committee periodically references historical figures in its attack claims, and several of AQIM's *katibats* (combatant elements) are named after historical military leaders.

AQIM officials are adept at weaving historical references into calls for greater action or commitment on the part of contemporary Muslims, as in this September 2008 audio communiqué from AQIM *amir* `Abd al-Wadud, which included a message directed to the Algerian people:

> Grandsons of Uqbah and Tariq and Yusuf bin Tashfin and Al-Mu'iz Bin Badis and `Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi and `Umar al-Mukhtar, rise from your inertia and put your hands in the hands of your brothers, the mujahidin, in the al-Qa`ida Organization in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb who have sacrificed their money, their lives, and their honor for the sake of protecting Islam and the unity and the reverence of the Islamic Maghreb. Gather around the jihad with which Islam started so it becomes the only force and alternative to the regimes of apostasy that are ruling our countries.[6]

By framing AQIM's actions as a continuation of Islam's past battles, `Abd al-Wadud seeks to create a direct

linkage between his group's terrorism and the glories of the past. The statement implies that current generations have a duty to continue fighting what is an ongoing struggle for Islam. Similarly, an October 2008 speech by Abu `Ubayda Yusuf contained the following exhortation to North African Muslims:

> I end my message by saluting the steadfast mujahidin in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb, you the grandsons of Uqba, the conqueror of the Maghreb, and Musa Bin Nasir, the conqueror of Andalusia, and Tariq Ibn Ziyad, the vanquisher of the Romans and the Spanish, and [Yusuf] Tashfin, the hero of Zalaqa, and Abd al-Hamid Bin Badis, the leader of the reforms. Today you are the pride of the umma in a time of exploitation; you are the hope in reclaiming its usurped honor in our broken Islamic Maghreb and the appropriated Andalusia, Cordoba, Sicily, and Zalaqa. We will not rest and we will not be content until we regain every inch of our usurped land including the occupied Sebta and Melilla, and let us meet with our beloved people in the land of Palestine.[7]

The preceding passage challenges local Muslims to continue their ancestors' achievements. It also frames AQIM's violence as part of a multigenerational effort to restore the caliphate, a goal more traditionally associated with al-Qa`ida's vision of global jihadism. Abu `Ubayda's reference to Sebta and Melilla (Spanish enclaves in Morocco), which some Muslims consider to be ongoing colonial occupations of Moroccan territory, links a current regional grievance to a historical foe in support of the argument that North Africa is again "occupied" by foreign forces.

In September 2008, AQIM media official Salah Abu Muhammad's speech defending AQIM against accusations of killing innocent Muslims contained this fiery passage:

> Be glad, Crusaders and apostates, with a generation that loves

death and martyrdom the way you love life, you can expect the battalions of martyrdom and the lions who hold their fingers on the trigger. We will not stop the raids until the Islamic Maghreb is liberated from Sarkozy and Bush's representatives. We will not stop the raids until every open inch is conquered and liberated by virtuous men such as `Uqba bin Nafi and Tariq bin Ziyad and Yusuf bin Tashfin and until the banner of Islam is raised high and you stop your support and collaboration with the Crusaders and stop your corruption and injustice and humiliation of the nation.[8]

Abu Muhammad reiterates the theme of continuity of struggle against the West, neatly conflating AQIM's "raids" with military campaigns orchestrated by Muslim states whose legitimacy was recognized at the time. By identifying AQIM as a modern day extension of

> **"It also frames AQIM's violence as part of a multigenerational effort to restore the caliphate, a goal more traditionally associated with al-Qa`ida's vision of global jihadism."**

these campaigns, Abu Muhammad is attempting to frame AQIM's violence as legitimate acts of war conducted against enemies of Islam. In other words, he is arguing that the Maghreb is in an ongoing state of war and that AQIM's actions are legally sound responses to Western aggression. Abu Muhammad's focus on the "Crusaders" rather than local regimes places his statement squarely in line with al-Qa`ida's focus on the "far enemy."

Conclusion
It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of any form of terrorist propaganda, let alone measure the impact of these particular references to historical

6 Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud, "A Message to Our Nation in the Islamic Maghreb," audio statement, September 21, 2008.

7 Abu `Ubayda Yusuf, "Congratulations on the Occasion of Id to the Nation of Monotheism," audio statement, October 6, 2008.

8 Salah Abu Muhammad, "Who Are the Killers of the Innocent Ones?" audio statement, September 3, 2008.

figures. Short of a verifiable statement from a terrorist that described the arguments that convinced him or her to join AQIM, the utility of AQIM's historical analogies will likely never be known. Nonetheless, the frequency and consistency with which these references appear suggest that AQIM believes that historical references boost their arguments. If at some point in the future AQIM were to abandon such references, it could indicate that the group determined that they were ineffective.

For the time being, it is clear that AQIM's references to historical figures support both global and local jihadist grievances, allowing the group to leverage historical narratives to support its dual objectives of overthrowing local regimes and participating in al-Qa`ida's vision of transnational jihad against the far enemy. By referencing historical figures closely associated with North Africa, AQIM creates a link between its actions and those of past figures who fought to free the Maghreb from foreign influence and establish Islamic governance. The particular figures who are mentioned include individuals from Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania; all areas where AQIM would like to expand its reach. References to figures associated with Islam's caliphates and its conquest of European territory dovetail with al-Qa`ida's rhetorical interest in restoring a caliphate and focusing jihadist energy on the far enemy. In sum, AQIM's references to historical figures imbue its statements with multiple layers of contextual meaning and support its arguments that its violent actions are merely the latest stage of an ongoing "just" war against the enemies of Islam.

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AQAP a Rising Threat in Yemen

By Brian O'Neill

ON MARCH 15, 2009, a suicide bomber attacked a group of South Korean tourists in Yemen, killing four of them along with their Yemeni guide. Less than a week later on March 18, the South Korean delegation sent to investigate the attack was targeted by another suicide bomber, who detonated his explosives in the middle of their convoy.[1]

These two attacks show that a rumored peace treaty between al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Yemeni government is false.[2] More importantly, the terrorist attacks demonstrate that this reconstituted and renamed terrorist group[3] is more adaptable, tactically flexible, and strategically nimble than previously believed. Although the attacks lacked the reach of the 2008 mortar assault on the U.S. Embassy, they proved that AQAP remains a threat to both foreign nationals and to the Yemeni government. This article examines the implications of the two attacks, and how AQAP has evolved its propaganda to achieve better resonance with the Yemeni population.

Implications of the Attacks

Taken separately, both of the March 2009 suicide attacks are worrisome. Taken as a set, they reveal an organization that is both gaining strength and demonstrating a willingness to be influenced by the larger jihadist movement. Al-Qa`ida in Yemen had, before the destruction of its initial cadre around 2004,[4] been largely

1 There were no casualties, except for the life of the bomber, in the March 18 attack.
2 In early March, several newspapers reported that there was a potential peace treaty between the government and AQAP. The terms were rumored to be a one-year cessation of terrorist activity in exchange for the release of prisoners. It was never confirmed and was shown to be clearly false.
3 Al-Qa`ida terrorists in Yemen were formerly known as al-Qa`ida in Yemen. In late January, it announced that it was merging with the al-Qa`ida faction in Saudi Arabia, and that the two groups would now be known under one name, al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
4 Gregory Johnsen and Brian O'Neill, "Yemen Faces Second Generation of Islamist Militants," *Terrorism Focus* 4:27 (2007). By 2004, through a combination of arrests, assassinations and negotiations, the al-Qa`ida franchise

as idiosyncratic in tactics and ideas as the country's politics. It was willing to use the time-honored Yemeni culture of negotiation, and abided by what were essentially non-aggression pacts with the government. Under the new leadership of Nasir al-Wahayshi and Qasim al-Raymi, who reorganized the outfit following a 2006 prison escape, it has shown an ability to weave itself into the larger jihadist framework while remaining tied to Yemen's cultural norms. Their leaders have shown respect for and knowledge of Yemen's complex tribal system and are able to use it to their advantage. Their narrative within Yemen, for example, has focused largely on the traditional tribal distrust of the government in Sana`a. While Yemeni nationalism exists, the tribal areas are wary of centralization, and al-Wahayshi and al-Raymi expend great effort to paint themselves as being on the side of the tribesmen against the government. This narrative is a powerful one, and its appeal is rooted in Yemeni tribal culture. In this way, AQAP is different, and in the long-run more dangerous, than al-Qa`ida's troubled franchise in Iraq.

The March 15 bombing near the iconic mudbrick towers of Shibam highlighted several important aspects of the group's strength. The first is that the bomber, identified as Abd al-Rahman Mahdi Ali Qasim al-`Ujayri, used his body as the weapon. In the past, al-Qa`ida-affiliated operatives in Yemen used vehicles or boats in their suicide attacks; while effective, these attacks did not allow for as great a flexibility in target selection. This change demonstrates the ability to draw from jihadist tactics used elsewhere, such as in Iraq and Palestine.

The second aspect involves the nature of the bombing itself. AQAP said in a statement that the Koreans were killed partly in revenge for their government's cooperation against Islamic terrorism,[5] as well as "the role of these tourists in corrupting the ideology of Muslims and their morals." It seems more likely that this justification was developed after the attack. According to witnesses, the bomber, rather than targeting a group to

responsible for the bombing of the USS *Cole* had ceased to be a viable organization.
5 "Al-Qaeda Claims Killing South Korean Tourists in Revenge," *News Yemen*, March 27, 2009.

avenge grievances, selected the largest group he could find to maximize the impact; they happened to be Koreans.[6] The fact that al-`Ujayri was able to select his target shows an increased level of training and commitment, as he presumably did not detonate his explosives prematurely and was able to wait until he found a target that would achieve the most impact.[7] This could plausibly be tied to the training he purportedly received in Somalia.[8]

The second attack, although a failure in terms of body count, was a psychological success that demonstrated AQAP's operational abilities as well as sending a message that even official status does not guarantee protection from its reach. There are two scenarios of how this attack occurred. The first is that the attack had been planned in advance. The second is that the operation was born quickly from a presented opportunity. At this time, not enough reliable information exists to determine which scenario occurred; both, however, are troublesome.

If the attack had been planned in tandem with the first bombing, it reflects that the strategists of AQAP have the foresight to maximize the impact of their assaults. The second scenario, that of a rapidly-seized opportunity, would show that al-Wahayshi, in addition to being able to adapt and rapidly plan an operation, has a pool of recruits who are both ready to deploy at a moments notice and are already trained well enough to successfully conduct an operation (successful in terms of avoiding arrest before the mission is completed).

AQAP's Dominance in the "Virtual Space"

All of these tactical abilities show al-Qa`ida's flexibility to adapt in the physical environment. While impressive, the aftermath of the attacks is where AQAP has demonstrated its real power and danger—its increasing strength in what analyst Andrew Exum describes as their "virtual space."[9] This refers to the world of jihadist

forums, statements, and publications. In it, AQAP has developed a remarkable ability to finesse its ideological message to strike resonant chords with disparate audiences. Their flagship publication, *Sada al-Malahim* (*The Echo of Battles*), is frequently timed for release shortly before or after a new operation, and provides justifications that are both political and theological, and manages

"AQAP's goal is to weaken and bring down the Yemeni government to create a safe haven for their group."

to target both what they see as the apostate regime of Ali Abdullah Salih and the far devil of Islam's Western enemies. Al-Wahayshi's propaganda wing is on a steep learning curve since its initial media forays in 2007 and has seemed to increase in sophistication with each message. While its reach may have been enhanced due to the merger with al-Qa`ida in Saudi Arabia, its reputation for professionalism was developed entirely on the Yemeni side. They gained a reputation for both skilled presentation and rapid response time well before there were even rumors of Saudi influence in al-Qa`ida in Yemen.

In the latest issue of *Sada al-Malahim*, Nayf Muhammad al-Qahtani, a Saudi citizen and AQAP leader, discussed both the recently published list by Saudi Arabia of their 85 most wanted terrorists and the alleged rape of Muslims by U.S. soldiers in Iraqi prisons.[10] The issue demonstrates al-Qahtani's skill in linking the depredations of the West with the quisling, "heretical" governments of the peninsula. In doing this, he is attempting to tie together several sources of frustration. The near and far enemies are a usual trope in jihadist literature, but the real talent of AQAP is to not lose sight of what makes their home terrain unique.

Indeed, the statement of responsibility for the dual bombings, despite its after-the-fact rationalizations, was itself a minor masterpiece that revealed several dueling but linked strategies for the group. It is easy for an organization with broad ambitions to lose sight of its domestic objectives, just as it is easy for an organization to become overly concerned with settling scores at home and fail to carry out larger missions; the latter of which increase recruitment by enhancing the organization's reputation and maintain positive morale among the more restless foot soldiers. These conflicting objectives can potentially overwhelm even the most fervent. It must be noted that despite its regional ambitions, AQAP shrewdly has not abandoned parochial issues, and in its statement claimed that the bombing was in revenge for the government's August 2008 killing of al-Qa`ida leader Hamza al-Q`uyati.[11] AQAP has a few reasons for making this claim. First, there is truth to the statement. Second, it reflects a broader strategy. AQAP has frequently alleged that its men have been tortured in Yemeni prisons, and this is not a charge that is beyond the pale. By tying in its specific grievances to issues held by the public at large, and specifically by attempting to make claims that will resonate with tribesmen, who are always wary of interference from Sana`a, AQAP is helping themselves establish safe zones outside the government's writ.

This strategy is what makes AQAP a dangerous force. Its predecessors—al-Qa`ida before 2004—were willing to compromise with the government. Under the inflexible leadership of al-Wahayshi and al-Raymi, however, there is no compromise with a "compromised" government. Eschewing negotiations does not mean they are abandoning all Yemeni traditions; they are just exchanging one inconvenient tradition with the more appealing system of revenge. In utilizing a tit-for-tat justification, such as the death of al-Q`uyati, they are tying themselves into the fabric of Yemeni culture, as well as brandishing their anti-government credentials. This is important in tribal areas that have a strong libertarian bent.

6 Inal Irsan, "Qaeda Suicide Bomber Behind Yemen Suicide Attack," Reuters, March 17, 2009.

7 Lin Noueihed, "Qaeda Bomber Behind Suicide Attack Trained in Somalia," Reuters, March 17, 2009.

8 Ibid.

9 Andrew Exum, "No Place to Hide," *The New Republic*, March 31, 2009.

10 The latest issue of *Sada al-Malahim* was released on March 21, 2009 and is available on various jihadist web forums.

11 "Al-Qaeda Claims Killing South Korean Tourists in Revenge," *News Yemen*, March 27, 2009. Al-Q`uyati was an al-Qa`ida leader killed in a raid by security forces in Tarim on August 12, 2008.

Conclusion

It is by accusing the government of torture, addressing what they see as specific government misdeeds, connecting with people on a tribal level and not losing sight of their global struggle that the reconstituted al-Qa`ida has managed to outstrip its predecessors in threat potential. AQAP is at the forefront of the next wave of jihad. The Yemen-dominated merger of the two al-Qa`ida franchises adds Saudi knowledge to an outfit that has grown in strength. It has integrated into the bewildering morass of Yemeni politics, exploiting the institutional weaknesses of the government, and is far-sighted enough to further chip away at its shaky foundation. AQAP's goal is to weaken and bring down the Yemeni government to create a safe haven for their group; their strategy is to attack tourism and the oil industry, the two tottering pillars of a desperate economy.

The suicide attacks demonstrated that AQAP is equally skilled at both operations; their concurrent propaganda outlined the organization's overall strategy. These developments prompt the need for an equally intelligent counterstrategy. The framework of this strategy would have to involve a deeper knowledge of the tribal system in Yemen, and the ability to play competing factions in AQAP against each other to fragment what is now a well-run and stable hierarchy. This would have to work hand-in-hand with strengthening the economic stability of the Yemeni government, while helping it to increase its legitimacy with its disaffected citizenry. Presently, however, the militants are growing in strength while the government is being inversely weakened. If AQAP is successful, it could bring the most important front in the struggle against jihad from the wilds of Afghanistan and Pakistan home to the holy lands.

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The Role of the United Nations in Defeating Al-Qa`ida and Associated Groups

By Richard Barrett

IN THE 12 MONTHS prior to April 2009, groups recognized by the United Nations Security Council as associated with al-Qa`ida[1] carried out operations in, or directly affecting, 22 countries.[2] They attempted to carry out operations in 10 others.[3] The assault on Mumbai in November 2008, believed to have been carried out by Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, was the only attack that met the standard of global coverage and visual impact that the world generally associates with al-Qa`ida, but the overall range of attacks shows that the al-Qa`ida network, however loose-knit, remains very much alive.

Each country is responsible for its own security, and operational counterterrorism activity generally takes place at a national level. Yet, given the international nature of the al-Qa`ida network,[4] there is a clear need—and universal support—for a coordinated international response. In this respect, the United Nations plays an important role. The United Nations contributes in three ways: the General Assembly, comprising all 192 member-states, builds political support for international action to counter terrorism and provides legitimacy by drawing up international legal agreements; the Security Council, with its five permanent and 10 elected

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1 For a list of groups established and maintained by the UN 1267 Committee as associated with al-Qa`ida, Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them, see www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolidatedlist. htm#alqaedaent.

2 These countries include: Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Canada, China, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Iraq, Italy, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States, the United Kingdom and Yemen. Israel suffered an attack from an unlisted group calling itself Al-Qa`ida in the Levant.

3 These countries include: Denmark, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates.

4 This includes al-Qa`ida's core leadership, its established regional affiliates, and the propagation of its ideas to homegrown or self-recruited cells.

members, promotes coordinated international action by designing counterterrorist measures mandatory for all states; and the United Nations bureaucracy provides mechanisms that coordinate, monitor and assist states with the implementation of the policies and agreements decided by the General Assembly and the Security Council.[5] This article explains these three entities, examines which of al-Qa`ida's weaknesses can be exploited, and identifies five steps the United Nations can take to help defeat al-Qa`ida.

The General Assembly

Since 1963, the United Nations has elaborated 13 international instruments to counter terrorism and three additional protocols.[6] These have defined specific acts of terrorism and have provided a legal framework within which to address them. In September 2006, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a broad strategy to counter terrorism and identified five main areas for action: 1) addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism; 2) preventing and combating terrorism; 3) raising the capacity of states to counter terrorism; 4) strengthening the role of the United Nations in counterterrorism; and 5) ensuring respect for human rights when countering terrorism.[7] Given long-standing differences over the definition of terrorism, the adoption of the strategy by all 192 member-states was a remarkable show of unity and determination.

The Security Council

The Security Council focused on al-Qa`ida following the attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August 1998. The next year it adopted resolution 1267, from which it developed a worldwide sanctions regime directed against al-Qa`ida and the Taliban following the attacks of September 11, 2001. The Security Council's role has been controversial, both because counterterrorism is more traditionally the preserve of the General

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5 For a comprehensive presentation of UN action against terrorism, see www.un.org/terrorism.

6 To view the UN Treaty Collection on terrorism, see www.untreaty.un.org/English/Terrorism.asp.

7 This is drawn from the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted on September 8, 2006. For the entire document, see www.un.org/terrorism/strategy-counter-terrorism.shtml.

Assembly, and because its sanctions regime has given rise to legal challenges. Sanctioned parties have challenged the legality of the restrictions against them on the grounds that the procedures adopted by states to implement the Security Council directives ignore their basic rights, in particular the right to be heard and the right to an effective judicial review.

These legal challenges have not yet put any country in the uncomfortable position of being unable to implement a mandatory resolution of the Security Council without contravening its own laws. This may happen, however, and it is clearly a pressing task for the Security Council to find a way to maintain its authority without losing the willing support of the international community.[8]

The United Nations Bureaucracy

There are four main bodies that deal with counterterrorism within the United Nations bureaucracy: 1) the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) helps to monitor the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001),[9] which obliges states to establish the legal means to take a range of counterterrorism measures; 2) the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team helps to oversee the sanctions regime established by Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999) against al-Qa`ida and the Taliban; 3) the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna (UNODC) provides training and assistance to states in the legal sphere;[10] and 4) the Secretary-General's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) helps to implement the global strategy adopted by the General Assembly in 2006.[11] These four bodies cooperate closely and coordinate their work to provide member-states with a coherent

picture of the international strategy to counter terrorism.

Exploiting Al-Qa`ida's Weaknesses

National and international action has reduced the influence of the al-Qa`ida leadership and weakened its ability to launch attacks in all areas except South Asia.[12] Pakistan appears to be al-Qa`ida's base, and the success or failure of measures to defeat it there will decide its long-term future. Yet the task is exceptionally difficult, and the greatest burden by far will fall on authorities in Pakistan. In parallel to

> **"The United Nations can best counter al-Qa`ida's message by stressing repeatedly the criminal nature of its activity, its absence of any real vision for the future, and its lack of concern that the majority of its victims are Muslims."**

whatever military and political action Pakistan may take on its border with Afghanistan, there is much that the United Nations and others can do elsewhere to undermine al-Qa`ida's image and appeal.

Al-Qa`ida has a number of weaknesses. First, it appears that it is losing credibility with potential sympathizers and supporters, highlighted by its present failures in Iraq. Furthermore, while it threatens major attacks against Western targets, it has done nothing successful in the West since the attacks in London in July 2005. Second, it lacks relevance. It has made no useful contribution toward resolving any of the main political issues affecting the Muslim community that it claims to defend. For instance, it has not helped the Palestinian people despite often repeating that their plight is a principal motivation for its actions.[13] Its principal

affiliates have an equally poor track record of achievement, having failed to benefit the people of Iraq, Algeria, Saudi Arabia or Yemen. Third, it lacks legitimacy in parts of the Muslim world, even in extremist circles. It has no religious authority and its self-serving interpretation of Islam has come under increasing attack from radicals with better credentials.

The United Nations provides an ideal forum from which to expose and exploit these weaknesses. In fact, the United Nations is in many ways the natural global adversary to the global terrorism preached by al-Qa`ida. The values identified with the United Nations— such as democracy, individual human rights, the freedom of religion and the promotion of peace—are the exact values and fundamental freedoms that al-Qa`ida rejects.[14] Not only does al-Qa`ida condemn the General Assembly and the Security Council as expressions of secularist state politics, it also criticizes the work of UN specialized agencies and peacekeepers—especially those operating in areas of conflict and weak government—as unwarranted and unwelcome interference on behalf of Western interests.[15] Indeed, al-Qa`ida has mounted two direct attacks against the United Nations: in Baghdad in August 2003, and in Algiers in December 2007.

Five Steps for the United Nations

The United Nations can help to bring about the defeat of al-Qa`ida in five main ways. First, it must uphold and promote its core values in counterterrorism work. The United Nations is uniquely able to bring governments together to address topics of global concern in a neutral setting. It can also isolate an issue from any broader context to allow states to discuss joint work on terrorism even when they have deep bilateral differences on other issues. This convening power allows the United Nations some influence over the way that states plan and execute

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8 For an overview of the legal challenges and a discussion of their impact, see the Al-Qaida and Taliban Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team's reports, available at www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/monitoringteam.shtml.

9 The website for the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee can be accessed at www.un.org/sc/ctc/.

10 For more on the UNODC's role in terrorism prevention, see www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/the-role-of-unodc-in-terrorism-prevention.html.

11 See www.un.org/terrorism/cttaskforce.shtml.

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12 More specifically, in all areas other than Afghanistan and Pakistan.

13 Usama bin Ladin issued an audiotape on March 14,

2009 again asserting this, although admitting that al-Qa`ida had done little to help the Palestinian people.

14 Usama bin Ladin's March 14, 2009 statement criticized freedom of opinion and freedom of speech.

15 For example, al-Zawahiri's statement on Sudan, released on March 24, 2009, criticized the United Nations for inaction in Gaza while it "pretends to cry over the suffering of the people of Darfur."

their counterterrorism strategies, and it can use this influence to promote the argument that any sacrifice of basic rights in the fight against terrorism not only hands the terrorists a victory, but pushes more people to support them.

Second, the United Nations can weaken the appeal of al-Qa`ida's message by resolving long-standing political disputes. Al-Qa`ida exploits the sense of frustration and helplessness that exists where government is weak, where conflict prevails and where justice is arbitrary. The United Nations must, on the one hand, find solutions to these long-standing problems and, on the other hand, continue to explain why terrorism is counterproductive as a tactic. The more progress that the international community can make through discussion and negotiation, the more marginalized al-Qa`ida will become.

This means that the United Nations should use the range of tools available, from the imposition of sanctions to the deployment of peacekeepers and aid workers, in a coherent manner and within a strategic framework. This should include, for example, reconciliation talks in Afghanistan, development projects in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, support for the authority of Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad's government in Somalia, capacity building in the Sahel and Yemen, and similar assistance in other vulnerable areas.

Third, the United Nations can highlight the real consequences of al-Qa`ida's actions. It is easy enough to demonstrate that the victims of terrorism are members of the same community from which the terrorists themselves are drawn, whether in terms of immediate death and destruction or in terms of the longer lasting economic or other indirect consequences.[16] When governments point this out, there may be a tendency for some audiences to discount the message as propaganda; less so when the message is promulgated by the United Nations. The CTITF has a working group that focuses on the victims of terrorism, and has projects agreed with three states to film repentant terrorists and their victims to demonstrate the

similarities between them; these will be ready for release through major national and regional networks in the second half of 2009. In addition, the film project will make brief clips of repentant terrorists for distribution through the internet, designed to dissuade others from following their course.

Fourth, the United Nations can undermine al-Qa`ida by attacking the legitimacy of its arguments. This should not be done by joining in a debate, which would give al-Qa`ida more standing than it deserves, but by providing support and encouragement for rehabilitation and reintegration programs that demonstrate the falsity of the arguments used by al-Qa`ida and its associates to justify their violence. People who leave terrorism behind are likely to return to the environments from which they were recruited and therefore may be able to influence others with similar vulnerabilities to the al-Qa`ida message. Several states have such programs and other countries have recently asked the United Nations for help in starting them. The United Nations can compile examples of best practices and help craft programs, while taking account of different cultural and social conditions.

Finally, the United Nations can attack the spread of al-Qa`ida's message. This is the hardest target of all. Al-Qa`ida has managed to weave a seductive narrative that appeals to a wide audience. It offers meaning and action at a time when many people feel they lack purpose and opportunity. It preys on a wide range of grievances and knits them together in the single complaint that Western influences have undermined the political and social values of Islam. Al-Qa`ida has built an enduring myth around its leadership as men of purity and conviction, able to strike massive blows against a powerful enemy and successfully escape retribution. The United Nations can best counter al-Qa`ida's message by stressing repeatedly the criminal nature of its activity, its absence of any real vision for the future, and its lack of concern that the majority of its victims are Muslims.

Al-Qa`ida's appeal will decline if the leadership is captured or killed. Short of this, even if the leadership is forced

into still more remote areas, use of the internet will continue to give it a wide audience. The CTITF has set up a working group to look at terrorist use of the internet. Its general conclusion concerning the promulgation of the al-Qa`ida message is that an open internet that allows the exposure of al-Qa`ida's message to criticism, and even to ridicule, is more effective in limiting its appeal than any attempt to shut down forums and websites that promote it.[17]

Conclusion

The United Nations must work with others to expose the gap between the promises made by the al-Qa`ida narrative and the reality of what it delivers. It can also help to promote a counternarrative through the engagement of civil society, focusing this work on those who are tempted to join al-Qa`ida, rather than those who have already done so. Hardened al-Qa`ida supporters are more likely to retreat further into their closed groups in the face of criticism than question the basis of their beliefs.

To maximize its contribution to the defeat of al-Qa`ida, the United Nations must increase the credibility, relevance and legitimacy of its counterterrorism work as a contrast to the irrelevance, illegitimacy and ineffectiveness of al-Qa`ida. It must play the leading role in coordinating and promoting international action to overcome the threat from global terrorism.

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16 For example, the CTITF organized a symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism in September 2008.

17 "Report of the Working Group on Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes," UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), February 2009.

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

March 1, 2009 (IRAQ): The mayor of Samarra, Mahmoud al-Khalaf, was wounded when a roadside bomb struck his convoy. – *Reuters, March 1*

March 1, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone strikes killed eight people in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. At least four of the dead were believed to be foreign fighters. Various press reports alleged that the strikes targeted the forces of Tehrik-i-Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud. – *Dallas Morning News, March 2*

March 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed six people at a religious school for girls in Balochistan Province. Pakistani press reports stated that the attacker wanted to assassinate a senior leader of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), who was scheduled to speak at the school. The JUI-F leader was not harmed in the attack. – *Bloomberg, March 3; Daily Times, March 3*

March 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen in Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province, attacked the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team as it was being driven to the Gadaffi Stadium. The attack, which occurred in daylight, left at least seven Pakistanis dead. Six members of the Sri Lankan team, along with a British coach, were injured. Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jaysh-i-Muhammad were suspected of being behind in the attack. – *Independent, March 4; Reuters, March 4; UPI, March 6*

March 4, 2009 (IRAQ): Iraqi security forces claimed to have killed Hamza Ubid Idris, also known as Abu al-Ansar, an al-Qa`ida leader allegedly responsible for directing attacks in western Iraq. He was killed in Anbar Province. – *The Age, March 6*

March 4, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber killed two police officers in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *UPI, March 4*

March 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Insurgents attacked Bagram Airbase. A car bomb exploded outside the base's gates, quickly followed by a suicide bombing. At least three people were injured. – *Guardian, March 4*

March 4, 2009 (SOMALIA): Masked gunmen assassinated Shaykh Ali Afyare, a prominent cleric affiliated with the Sufi Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama movement. He was killed in Mudug region. – *Garowe Online, March 5*

March 5, 2009 (IRAQ): A pickup truck rigged with explosives detonated in a crowded livestock market in Babil Province, killing 12 people. – *The Age, March 6*

March 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants blew up 16 stores selling DVDs and music in Takht Bhai town northwest of Peshawar. There were no casualties as the explosives were detonated during the night of March 4-5. – *AFP, March 4*

March 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants blew up the mausoleum of 17th century Sufi saint Abdul Rahman Mohmand, also referred to as Rahman Baba, in Peshawar. According to one press report, "Caretakers of the complex said they had received a warning letter from purported Taliban militants three days before the attack threatening to blow up the mausoleum if women continued to visit it." – *Washington Times, March 14*

March 6, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Supreme Court dismissed accused al-Qa`ida operative Ali al-Marri's appeal, which sought to challenge his indefinite military imprisonment. – *Reuters, March 6*

March 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber killed seven officers at a roadblock established to inspect vehicles traveling from Khyber Agency to Peshawar. – *AP, March 7*

March 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Tribal officials in South Waziristan claim that Taliban militants shot down a low-flying unmanned aerial drone. The U.S. military denied that one of its unmanned aircraft was shot down. – *AFP, March 7*

March 7, 2009 (SOMALIA): Shaykh Hassan Yaqob, spokesman for the al-Shabab factions that control Kismayo and the southern Jubba regions, told reporters that his fighters are "no threat" to neighboring Kenya. He said that "there is ongoing propaganda intended to destroy the security and order of the Jubba regions." – *Garowe Online, March 7*

March 8, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber driving an explosives-laden motorcycle blew himself up near a police academy in Baghdad, killing 28 people. The Islamic State of Iraq later took credit for the operation in an online statement. – *New York Times, March 8; AFP, March 11*

March 8, 2009 (IRAQ): The Iraqi and U.S. governments announced that 12,000 U.S. troops will leave Iraq by the end of September 2009. – *AFP, March 8*

March 10, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber targeted tribal leaders in Abu Ghurayb, killing at least 30 people. – *Bloomberg, March 10*

March 10, 2009 (SOMALIA): Somalia's cabinet voted to implement Shari`a law across the country. The proposal will now be presented to the parliament for final approval. – *Reuters, March 10*

March 11, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Officials at the FBI and National Counterterrorism Center testified before Congress that "tens" of Somali-Americans, primarily from Minneapolis, have traveled to Somalia to fight with the Islamist militant group al-Shabab. One of the recruits included a 27-year-old male who blew himself up in a suicide attack. According to FBI national security official Philip Mudd, however, "These folks aren't going over there to become part of terrorist cells." Nevertheless, officials could not rule out the possibility that some of the recruits could eventually return and attack the United States. – *Reuters, March 11*

March 11, 2009 (YEMEN): Yemen charged 16 suspected al-Qa`ida operatives with forming an al-Qa`ida cell that planned a series of attacks, including a March 2008 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Sana`a. The men—14 Yemenis and two Syrians—were arrested on separate occasions during 2007 and 2008. – *AP, March 11*

March 12, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drones launched approximately four missiles at a militant camp in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. An estimated 24 suspected militants were killed in the strikes. – *Reuters, March 13*

March 12, 2009 (THAILAND): Thailand announced that it will be sending 4,000 additional troops to the south in an effort to quell an intensifying insurgency. The Thai prime minister acknowledged that the mission in the south has so far been "unsuccessful." – *TNA, March 12*

March 14, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Jazira broadcast a new audiotape purportedly by al-Qa`ida chief Usama bin Ladin. During the recording, Bin Ladin accused some Arab leaders of being "complicit" with Israel and the West in a "Crusader-Zionist alliance against our people." Bin Ladin urged a holy war to liberate the Palestinian Territories and also called on jihadists to liberate Iraq from the U.S. military. He called the recent Israeli intervention in Gaza a "holocaust." – *AFP, March 14*

March 15, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike killed two Arabs and three other people in Bannu District of the North-West Frontier Province. – *Washington Post, March 16*

March 15, 2009 (YEMEN): Four South Korean tourists were killed in a suicide bombing in Hadramawt Province. Two Yemenis were also killed. The Yemeni government blamed al-Qa`ida for the attack and claimed that the bomber was trained in neighboring Somalia. – *AP, March 15; BBC, March 15; AFP, March 16; Reuters, March 17*

March 15, 2009 (YEMEN): Yemen's Interior Ministry announced that they recently captured Abdullah Abdul-Rahman Mohammed al-Harbi, one of the most wanted militants in Saudi Arabia. Al-Harbi was apprehended in Taiz Province. – *Saba, March 15*

March 16, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber wearing a police uniform detonated his explosives inside the main police building in Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province. At least three policemen were killed. – *AP, March 15*

March 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 14 people in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. The bomber detonated his explosives outside a restaurant. – *AFP, March 16*

March 16-17, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine troops fired on suspected Abu Sayyaf Group rebels who have been holding three Red Cross officers hostage since January 15 in the southern Philippines. A military spokesman said, "Two bodies of the Abu Sayyaf were recovered by the operating troops and have been positively identified as sub-leader Jul Asbi Jalmaani and Mudar Hadjail, his trusted man. Seven others are believed wounded or dead in the fighting." The hostages, however, are still being held captive. – *Reuters, March 16; Mindanao Examiner, March 17*

March 18, 2009 (YEMEN): A suicide bomber attacked a convoy of South Korean officials investigating the March 15 attack that killed four Korean tourists in Yemen. The South Korean ambassador to Yemen was in the convoy at the time of the latest attack. No one in the convoy was injured. – *AP, March 18*

March 19, 2009 (GLOBAL): A new audio message purportedly from al-Qa`ida leader Usama bin Ladin appeared on Islamist web forums. Bin Ladin tells Somali fighters that President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad should be "dethroned, fought and removed with armed force" because he has "changed to partner up with the infidel." – *RTTNews, March 19; CNN, March 19*

March 19, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Dad Mohammad Khan, a key anti-Taliban lawmaker from Helmand Province, was killed along with four others after a bomb ripped through their vehicle in Helmand. According to one report, "The killing took to 10 the number of MPs who have died in attacks since they were elected in Afghanistan's first democratic parliamentary vote in 2005." – *AFP, March 19*

March 20, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban and police clashed in northern Jawzjan Province, on the border with Turkmenistan. Nine Afghan policemen and a district chief were killed. – *AFP, March 19*

March 21, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber detonated his explosives at a police checkpoint in Nangarhar Province, killing three civilians and one policeman. – *AP, March 20*

March 21, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): NATO forces killed senior Taliban commander Maulawi Hassan and nine of his associates in Helmand Province. – *AP, March 23*

March 23, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Alleged al-Qa`ida terrorist Ali al-Marri pleaded not guilty to conspiracy and supporting terrorism in a federal court in Peoria, Illinois. U.S. District Judge Michael Mihm set a tentative trial date for May 26. Al-Marri has been in U.S. custody since December 2001. – *Los Angeles Times, March 24*

March 23, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated explosives in a Kurdish funeral tent in Jalula, Diyala Province, killing at least 15 people. – *Independent, March 24*

March 23, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants ambushed a police vehicle in Kandahar Province, killing eight policemen. – *AFP, March 23*

March 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in Islamabad, killing a policeman. It appeared the bomber wanted to enter a police station before detonating his explosives, but was stopped at the gate. – *Washington Post, March 24*

March 24, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new videotape, in which he urged the Sudanese people to prepare for a "long guerrilla war" in light of the International Criminal Court's decision to charge Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir with war crimes. "The Sudanese regime is too weak to defend the Sudan, so you must do what was done by your brothers in Iraq and Somalia," al-Zawahiri said. He stated that he was "not defending Umar al-Bashir or his regime...the issue is one of making excuses for more foreign interference in the Muslims' countries in the framework of the contemporary Zionist Crusade." – *Bloomberg, March 24; CNN, March 24*

March 25, 2009 (GLOBAL): The U.S. government offered up to $11 million in rewards to find or capture Baitullah Mehsud, Sirajuddin Haqqani, and al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi. All three men are believed to be operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. – *AFP, March 25*

March 25, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike killed approximately seven militants in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Two vehicles were reportedly targeted. – *AFP, March 25*

March 25, 2009 (YEMEN): Yemen's Interior Ministry released a statement claiming it had arrested six men for plotting attacks against foreigners in the country. The statement said that the men were recruited by al-Qa`ida. – *AP, March 25*

March 26, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded on a commercial street in a Shi`a area of Baghdad, killing at least 20 people. – *AP, March 26*

March 26, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber prematurely detonated his explosives as he was "saying good-bye to his associates" before his mission, killing six militants. The incident occurred in Helmand Province. – *Reuters, March 26*

March 26, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked a police convoy in Ghazni Province, wounding six policemen. Four militants were killed. – *AP, March 26*

March 26, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked a police checkpoint in Helmand Province, killing nine policemen. – *AP, March 26*

March 26, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a restaurant in South Waziristan Agency, killing 11 people. Pakistan's Taliban movement claimed responsibility. – *Voice of America, March 26*

March 27, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): An Afghan soldier shot and killed two U.S. coalition soldiers in northern Afghanistan. The assailant killed himself immediately following the incident. – *AP, March 27*

March 27, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber blew himself up inside a mosque in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing at least 50 people. – *Voice of America, March 27*

March 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants destroyed 12 trucks loaded with supplies for NATO forces in Afghanistan. The fighters besieged Farhad terminal on the outskirts of Peshawar, using rockets and petrol bombs to destroy the parked vehicles. – *AFP, March 28*

March 28, 2009 (ALGERIA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) demanded that 20 of its members be released from detention in Mali and other countries in exchange for the release of six Western hostages. AQIM says that it is holding two Canadian diplomats kidnapped in Niger in December, along with four European tourists kidnapped in Mali in January. – *Reuters, March 28*

March 30, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber in a police uniform detonated his explosives inside a government office in Kandahar Province, killing at least nine people. – *AP, March 30; Reuters, March 30*

March 30, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Militants attacked a police academy in Lahore, Punjab Province, killing seven cadets and one civilian. Four militants were killed in the eight hour gun battle with security forces. Tehrik-i-Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud claimed credit for the operation. – *Reuters, March 31; AFP, March 30*

March 30, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into a Pakistani military convoy, killing three soldiers. The attack occurred in Bannu District of the North-West Frontier Province. – *AFP, March 30*

March 31, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber drove his explosives-laden truck into a police compound in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing seven people. – *Reuters, March 31*

March 31, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud vowed to "amaze everyone in the world" with an attack on Washington, D.C. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, however, said Mehsud has made similar threats before and that they had not seen any indications of an imminent plot on Washington. – *AP, March 31*